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ABSTRACT

This booklet tells the story of citizen organization and role in the school reform movement in the restructuring of the Chicago (Illinois) Public Schools. Chapter 1, "People Were 'Mad As Hell,'" relates the events immediately surrounding the Chicago Teachers Union strike that transformed discontent into community action. Chapter 2, "It Didn't Start With the Strike," outlines the documentation of the system's shortcomings by school advocacy groups, the history of organizing around school issues from the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, and the city's political context. Chapter 3, "The Movement," describes events from the end of the strike in October 1987 through May 1988, tracing the public process and the organizing, strategy-making, coalition-building, and lobbying that brought community organizations and representatives of the business community together around a common agenda for legislative action. Chapter 4, "Through the Legislature," describes the sometimes unusual processes that were used in the state legislature in Springfield (Illinois) that drafted and eventually passed the bill. Chapter 5, "What Happened Next," outlines the first two years of implementation and describes a few indications of the beginnings of classroom-level change. A final section offers conclusions and lessons learned. An appendix contains a summary of the legislation, a list of members of key organizations, and a list of sources for more information. (JB)

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School Reform Chicago Style

How Citizens Organized to Change Public Policy

By Mary O'Connell

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Acknowledgements

I have tried, in writing this book, to draw as much as possible on the actual words and experiences of the people involved in making Chicago school reform happen. I wish to thank all the participants who took time to talk to me or my associates; and I must acknowledge that, for each of the 40 people I interviewed, I could have interviewed five more. I have tried to represent the main groups and trends, and apologize in advance for any I have inadvertently omitted.

I have also reviewed written materials from *Catalyst*, the Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance, the Chicago Teachers Union, Chicago United, Designs for Change, and the Parent/Community Council, as well as other materials supplied by various reform participants and governmental bodies. I have also occasionally referred to accounts in the *Chicago Defender*, *Chicago Sun-Times*, and *Chicago Tribune*. Fred Hess, of the Chicago Panel, has been especially helpful in answering requests for information; and the Donors Forum Library and Cook County Law Library were useful sources of information.

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Finally, thanks to my husband, Malcolm Bush, whose own personal commitment to school reform has been a continuing inspiration; and to my children, Sarah and Haydn, who make it all worthwhile.

—Mary O'Connell

Personal disclaimer: Mary O'Connell is editor of The Neighborhood Works, published by the Center for Neighborhood Technology in Chicago. She is the mother of two children who attend Chicago Public Schools. She is married to Malcolm Bush, Vice President of Voices for Illinois Children, who served on the Parent/Community Council of the Mayor's Education Summit. She has in the past served as CNT's representative to the Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance (1987-1989) and been employed, on a consultant basis, by Designs for Change (1978-1985). Interpretations of events contained herein are solely those of the author, and should not be taken as representing those of the publisher, Center for Neighborhood Technology, or the funder, Woods Charitable Fund.

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Members of the Citywide Coalition for School Reform at the group's annual retreat, January 1990.

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Abbreviations

ABCs: Alliance for Better Chicago Schools, the reform coalition organized in spring 1988 after the collapse of the Summit

CURE: Chicagoans United to Reform Education, a coalition dating from spring 1977 including Designs for Change, Dean Michael Bakalis of Loyola, and Save Our Neighborhoods/ Save Our City coalition (SON/SOC).

KOCO: Kenwood-Oakland Community Organization, a South Side community group.

LSC: Local School Councils, set up under SB 1840 to run the schools.

Operation PUSH: People United to Serve Humanity, the activist organization founded by Rev. Jesse Jackson.

PCER: People's Coalition for Educational Reform, an alliance of social service agencies working on education issues that grew out of the Poverty Task Force and earlier anti-gang efforts.

PCC: The Parent/Community Council, appointed by Mayor Harold Washington to the Summit in November 1987.

PPAC: Professional Personnel Advisory Committees, to be elected by school staff to advise the LSCs on curriculum, staff development, and other issues.

PURE: Parents United for Responsible Education, a group of parents and teachers from North Side schools.

SB 1839: The school reform bill passed in July 1988, which received an amendatory veto from Governor Thompson.

SB 1840: The rewritten bill that passed the legislature in December 1988.

SON/SOC: Save Our Neighborhoods, Save Our City coalition, an alliance of community groups and churches in white ethnic neighborhoods on the Northwest and Southwest Sides.

TWO: The Woodlawn Organization, a long-established community organization (originally organized by Saul Alinsky) on Chicago's South Side.

UNO: United Neighborhood Organization, a network of community organizations in Hispanic (mainly Mexican) neighborhoods.

Introduction

"Chicago's schools are the worst in the nation—you've got close to educational meltdown here."—*Education Secretary William Bennett, November 7, 1987.*

"Mr. President, this morning I rise to celebrate a great political victory in Chicago, a triumph of grassroots political democratic action, ... a triumph born of a faith that parents, teachers, and neighborhood leaders can run our public schools better than a top-down, central board."—*Sen. Robert Kerrey (D-Nebraska), Congressional Record, October 13, 1989.*

Secretary Bennett's statement dramatized (some would say sensationalized) what, by 1987, was an increasingly obvious problem: the failure of Chicago's schools to provide an adequate education for most of the city's children. Senator Kerrey's speech two years later celebrated an attempt to solve that problem, through a radical restructuring of the way the schools are organized and governed.

What happened between those two statements by the two federal officials? How did Chicagoans, after decades of doomsaying of which Mr. Bennett's was only the latest, most dramatic example, find the political will to reform the way their schools are run? Why did they focus their efforts on school governance (rather than on resources going into the schools, or on the quality of teaching, or on the nature of the curriculum—all reform directions that have been tried elsewhere)? What combination of organizing and strategizing and coalition-building, of luck, and of creativity born of chaos, built the consensus for reform? What moved it through the legislature? What were the critical issues and obstacles to be overcome? And what lessons, if any, can be learned—not just for people working on school issues, but those intent on changing public policy around other major institutions?

How did Chicagoans find the political will to reform the way their schools are run? And what lessons, if any can be learned from their story—not just for people working on school issues, but those intent on changing public policy?

This publication attempts to answer those questions by telling the Chicago school reform story as it was viewed by those who participated in it. Writing it has demanded some choices and tradeoffs.

First, we've sacrificed the perspective of history by interviewing participants and writing the story relatively soon after the events described. The idea was to capture the experiences, and compare accounts, while the memories are still fresh. (Even then it's notable how much people's memories of critical events and dates have dimmed.)

Second, we've focused on the period up through the passage of the legislation, on July 2, 1988, and the successful compromise that brought final approval by the Legislature and the Governor in December of that year. Doing so has meant giving short shrift to another part of the story that is equally fascinating and instructive: how the reform coalition threw its energies and resources behind implementation of the legislation. And, with current efforts to rewrite parts of the bill to meet constitutional objections raised by the Illinois Supreme Court, the timing of publication means leaving the story before the final fate of the legislation is determined. On the other hand, we publish it in the hopes that recalling the history of the legislation itself will make attempts at revising it more productive.

Third, we've tried to tell the story of the organizing behind school reform (focusing less, therefore, on purely educational issues). In part, this focus reflects the interest of the project's funder, Woods Charitable Fund, in chronicling organizing efforts. But it also reflects the reform effort itself, which was essentially the story of building consensus around a new vision of the city's schools and carrying it through to legislative victory.

All of these choices—the timing of the writing, the focus on the organizing effort and on the legislative campaign—mean that we have not attempted to evaluate whether, and how, Chicago school reform "works," whether it really brings about changes in the city's schools so that teachers teach better and children learn more. This is, of course, the critical question. But it is too early to judge the reform effort by that standard. The answers will be written over the next decade, in the experiences of hundreds of schools and hundreds of thousands of children. The school reform movement was a successful public policy campaign that changed the structure and governance of Chicago's schools: but how the changes will translate in the work of teachers and the lives of children remains to be seen.

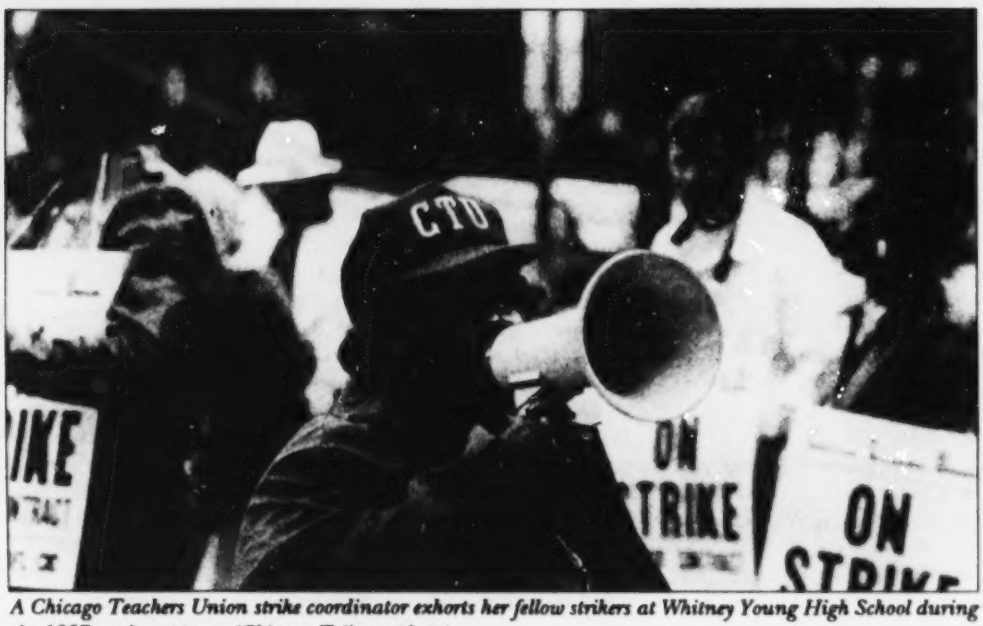
CHAPTER 1: People Were "Mad as Hell"

Throughout the spring and summer of 1987, Chicago parents could see the all-too-familiar signs appearing once again. The contract of the Chicago Teachers Union and other school unions with the Board of Education was set to expire. The union wanted a raise. The board insisted it didn't have the money—in fact, the board announced that teachers would be asked to take unpaid "holidays." When the school watchdog group, the Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance, suggested that the board could afford a modest pay increase by making judicious administrative cuts, the board ignored the suggestion. Mayor Harold Washington agreed with the board; the schools were low on funds, he said, and asked the union to hold off on salary demands. That public posture infuriated union leaders and made them determined, as one said, "to get out the picket signs." Negotiations were late getting started, and made little progress once they did get going.

As September rolled around, parents' fears became a depressingly familiar reality. For the ninth time since 1970, the CTU and other allied unions went on strike against the Chicago Board of Education. The schools, set to reopen on September 9, stayed closed, leaving 430,000 public school children missing days, then weeks, of the new school year. Elsewhere around the state, students were preparing science fair projects, writing reports on the bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution, practicing for the big football game. Chicago's students were, once again, out of luck.

With so much experience at it, many Chicago parents were quick to organize alternatives. They got help from employers, teachers, churches and community organizations. The Poverty Task Force, composed of youth and community service agencies in black and Hispanic areas, began organizing alternative schools in churches and daycare centers even before the strike. Parents from Inter-American Magnet School, led by school council president Joy Noven, organized their own child care co-operative. At downtown Harris Bank, Chairman Ken West and others set up a school for about 100 children of employees. Quickly, predictably, the strike moved off page one of the city's newspapers and dropped off the nighttime newscasts. Strikes were so much a feature of a Chicago public school education that Chicagoans had almost come to accept them as business-as-usual.

Almost. Something snapped during this strike, something that broke up the business-as-usual mood—not only in regard to the strike that was keeping the schools closed, but concerning the way the schools functioned when they were open. Nobody can pinpoint exactly what it was or when it started: everybody agrees that it was the accumulation of anger and frustration built up during the previous strikes, combined with the increasingly depressing evidence of reading scores, dropout rates, financial misdealings, and yet more strikes. The result was near-universal: "Parents were desperate," recalls school social worker Bernie Noven; "parents went wild," remembers Warren Bacon, of Chicago United; and Wieboldt Foundation director Anne Hallett says "people were mad as hell."



A Chicago Teachers Union strike coordinator exhorts her fellow strikers at Whitney Young High School during the 1987 work stoppage. (Chicago Tribune photo)

Don't Get Mad, Organize

Parents and teachers at Inter-American Magnet School, one of the most active school communities in the city, were among

the first to get together. Teacher Adela Coronado Greeley, a founder of the school, called a meeting at her house on September 14, telling people, "we've got to organize." Out of that meeting came the decision to invite parents from other schools to weekly meetings at the Welles Park Fieldhouse on the North Side; this was the origin of the Parents United for Responsible Education (PURE). Meanwhile, the Poverty Task Force was organizing parents through its member organizations, Network for Youth Services (Humboldt Park), Marcy Newberry Association (Near West Side), and Centers for New Horizons (South Side/Grand Boulevard areas). The group formed a new organization, People's Coalition for Educational Reform, and hired an articulate Southeast Side woman, Coretta McFerren, as its staff coordinator and chief spokesperson. In Hyde Park, parents Gordon and Mary Hynes-Berry put together a group called Believe in the Public Schools; Francoise Friedman, a North Side parent, began contacting parent leaders, primarily from magnet schools, to join her Concerned Parents Network.

Parents and students join in protest of the 1987 Chicago teachers strike. Demonstrators brought their message to the State of Illinois Center, then City Hall. (Chicago Tribune photo)

The newly organized parent groups quickly made connections with each other and with other, established school advocacy groups. The Welles Park PURE meetings, chaired by Joy Noven's husband Bernie, a school social worker and activist, attracted more and more people each week. Coretta McFerren, Gordon Berry, and Suzanne Davenport, from the advocacy group Designs for Change, all showed up at one time or another. Francoise Friedman, meanwhile, had invited both Joy Noven and Mary Hynes-Berry to become part of her network. Bernie Noven attended Poverty Task Force meetings at Marcy Newberry.

The parent groups began organizing public demonstrations. The People's Coalition for Educational Reform organized a "Rally for Quality Education" outside the Pershing Road headquarters of the Board of Education on September 18, which attracted hundreds of parents, and a "Hands across the Loop" demonstration some days later. Teach-ins at City Hall, organized by PURE, attracted press attention and drew more parents to attend PURE meetings. Believe in the Public Schools organized pickets at the home of Governor James Thompson. Some parents were calling for even more drastic steps: one conservatively attired man at a PURE meeting suggested, to general applause, "marching down LaSalle Street and shutting down the business district."

Francoise Friedman, meanwhile, eschewed the demonstrations and concentrated on organizing a meeting of parents with Washington on September 16, at which parents urged the Mayor to intervene. Washington, however, insisted that it was improper for him to intervene in complex labor negotiations—that such a step would be bringing politics into the schools.

Parents agreed on one thing: the need to bring pressure to end the strike. But they didn't agree on how to do it, and especially on the question of whether to support the teachers. PURE, for example, included a strong element of reform-minded teachers, and leader Bernie Noven was a committed union member; PURE members repeatedly expressed solidarity with the teachers. Other groups, however, wanted simply to bring pressure to bear on both sides, directly or through political leaders such as Thompson and Washington, to get the strike settled.

But the strike didn't get settled; even after the massive protests of September 18, it dragged on into a third and then a fourth week. The cry to end the strike was spreading. Major community organizations, especially African-American groups such as The Woodlawn Organization (TWO), the Urban League, Midwest Community Council, Heart of Uptown Coalition, and Kenwood-Oakland Community Organization, were putting pressure on both sides to settle; outgoing TWO director (and Washington ally) Leon Finney was the spokesman. The goal was to create public pressure to get the schools reopened, according to Finney, and deal with reform issues—and money questions—later. Finney says he had tacit approval from the Mayor's office for his efforts, but adds, "the Mayor didn't tell me to organize people and raise hell; I got that from Saul [Alinsky]... Everybody all over the city was raising hell. We didn't have to organize them, they organized themselves. We just networked with the hell-raisers."

While Finney's coalition was putting pressure on both sides, United Neighborhood Organization (UNO), an Hispanic network of community groups in primarily Mexican neighborhoods, decided to stand with the teachers and demand settlement on the unions' terms. It was a controversial decision, but a deliberate one, according to organizer Phil Mullins, intended to build a bridge to the teachers union in the hopes of working with them afterward on broader reform issues.

The Reform Agenda Builds

Broader reform issues had, in fact, begun to surface at various stop-the-strike sessions almost from the beginning. The meetings had, after all, been born out of extreme frustration built up over the years, not just about strikes, but over other school problems as well. The statement by the People's Coalition calling for the September 18 rally, for example, proclaimed that "Our Children are the victims of this strike, but even more importantly they are the victims of a School System which is failing to educate them"—and went on to call for major reforms of the school system. At early PURE meetings, activists such as Joan Cooper urged parents to stay together after the strike to fight for better schools.

The commitments were expressed in the groups' names: where earlier strikes had fostered a "Committee to Keep Our Schools Open," the 1987 groups took names such as People's Coalition for Educational Reform and Parents United for Responsible Education.

But the parent movement toward reform wasn't simply spontaneous. For such groups as the People's Coalition and Designs for Change, already committed to working on school reform, the strike was an organizer's dream: it got many more people to focus on school issues, and it got them energized enough to do something about them. Bernie Noven, a longtime school activist, says, "I'd been waiting for this opportunity for twenty years, and I knew this was the time to do it." "Our chances [of accomplishing reform] were greatly increased by the strike," says Don Moore of Designs for Change. "We kept going around to meetings saying, don't stop when the strike is settled. But I have to add that the broad response to the strike was much greater than anything we created. We didn't organize that—it just happened."

One notable place it didn't happen, by and large, was in the official parent groups already operating in the schools—the Local School Improvement Councils and District Councils, and the Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA). Some school-level leaders of such groups threw their energies into the new parent networks such as PURE and CPN (Joy Noven was president of her school's LSIC, Mary Hynes-Berry headed the Kenwood Academy PTA). But the larger organizations played little role in strike-related organizing. The PTA, according to its then vice president, Judy Budde, could not take a stand one way or the other on the strike, and was prevented by national policy from aiding others' organizing efforts by, for example, making its mailing list available. James Deanes, who was chairman of the District 7 Council, says "I didn't see a lot of activity" among the school councils.

When the strike continued in its fourth week, political pressure for a settlement grew overwhelming. Black community leaders' pressure on the board built, including threats to organize their own "Freedom Schools." Since both General Superintendent Manford Byrd and CTU president Jacqueline Vaughn were black, as was Mayor Washington, pressure from these organizations took its toll. Meanwhile noisy parent protests continued, culminating in a massive demonstration at City Hall on October 2, with thousands of parents and children circling the building chanting and waving signs saying "Mayor Be Fair," "CURE Our Schools," and "Settle the Strike!" A contingent of march leaders were allowed in to meet with the Mayor (whose aides had insisted earlier such a meeting was impossible). At the meeting, Washington vowed that the strike would be ended by the following Monday. He promised to revitalize the Summit as a vehicle for change. And, according to at least some of those present, he made another commitment: that School Supt. Byrd would be out of a job by January.

The first promise was kept: the strike indeed ended that weekend, on terms remarkably close to those suggested by the Chicago Panel before it had even started. The commitment to get rid of Byrd, if in fact he was serious about it, Washington did not live to fulfill.

He did, however, move quickly to harness the energies stirred up by the strike, by calling a public meeting at the University of Illinois Center on October 11. Groups from all over the city that had been active during the strike were invited to send two representatives to the meeting. The October 11 session was noisy, often rancorous—post-strike emotions were still running high. Washington used the meeting to call for a major popular effort to bring real change to the schools. In doing so, he was acknowledging a movement that had already begun.

Almost all observers agree that the 19-day strike in fall 1987 was the catalyst behind the 1988 school reform movement. Several important elements of the reform effort were apparent by the end of the strike:

First, parents were energized by the strike. The inconvenience of having children out of school an extra four weeks, combined with the perception that the strike was viewed as "business-as usual" by political and educational leaders, built parent anger to an extremely high level that fueled further reform efforts.

Second, unlike previous years parent and community pressure went beyond the demand to end the strike and gave vent to other frustrations about the schools.

Third, the educational establishment—the board and the union—lost face. Both became targets of intense anger during the strike. When the board ended up settling on terms remarkably close to those suggested by the Chicago Panel in August, it raised questions of whether the strike had been necessary at all. Many teachers were also disgusted.

However, while the strike was critical as a catalyst, it could not itself have produced a successful reform effort. The energies let loose by the strike were powerful, but they needed to be channeled into effective political action behind an agreed-upon goal in order for change to take place.

Fourth, parent and community groups began building and solidifying alliances with other groups around the city. The new parent groups got in touch with each other and with established school reform agencies; school reform groups took the opportunity to reach out to the new groups; community organizations such as UNO and the People's Coalition consciously used the strike to build alliances. The result was that a grassroots constituency was building that represented many areas of the city and all racial groups.

Fifth, the official parent organizations (PTAs and LSICs) did not play a leadership role; new groups and leaders emerged in the vacuum to represent parents.

However, while the strike was critical as a catalyst, it could not itself have produced a successful reform effort. The energies let loose by the strike were powerful, but they needed to be channeled into effective political action behind an agreed-upon goal in order for change to take place. That channeling was possible as the result of several other forces at work in the three years preceding the strike. It is to those forces, which provided the indispensable background for the reform effort, that we now turn.

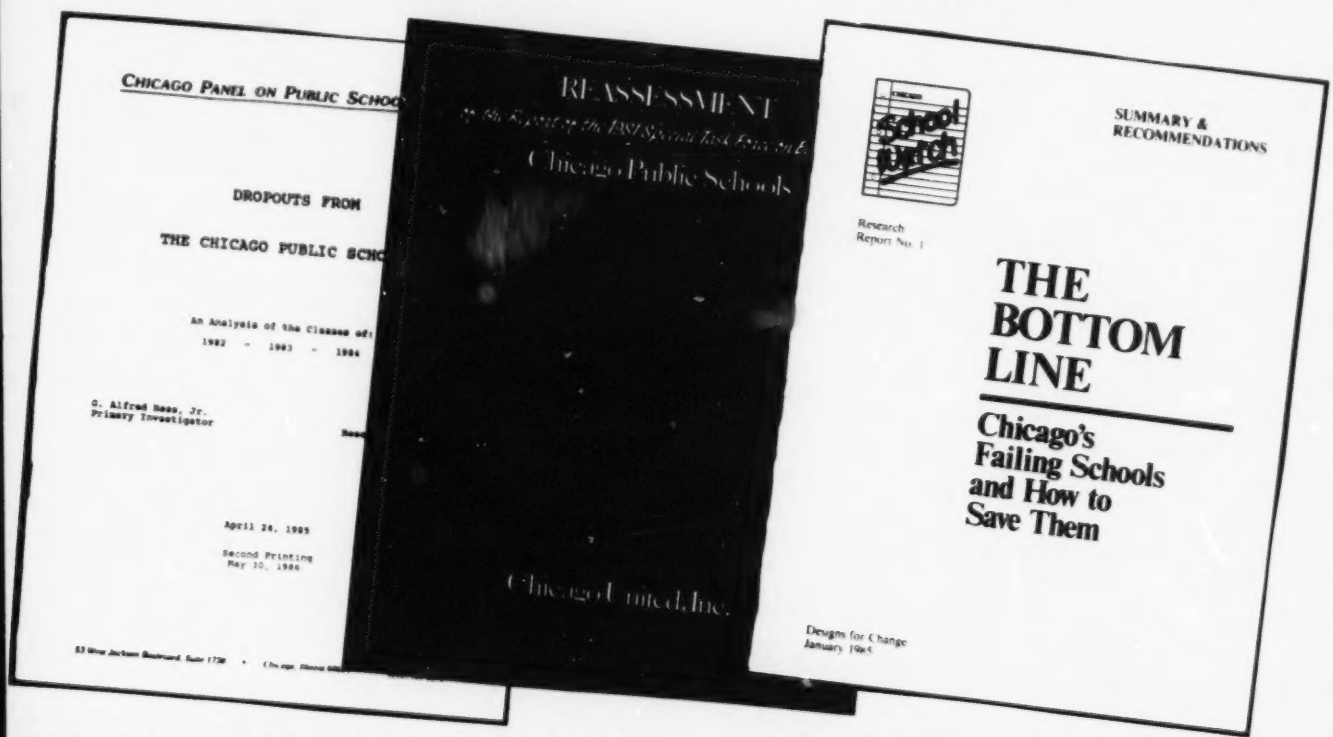
CHAPTER 2: It Didn't Start with the Strike

Documenting the Problems

Parents newly activated by the strike raised a laundry list of concerns about the schools: low reading scores, high dropout rates, inequitable distribution of resources, poor teacher performance, and many others. These complaints arose in part, of course, from parents' own experiences with the schools. But more generally, public awareness of these problems was the result of painstaking documentation of school performance by two leading school advocacy groups, Designs for Change and the Chicago Panel, and by the business group Chicago United. The work of these groups created a solid critique of the schools, one that was picked up and publicized by the city's newspapers and helped spread the perception that the schools were not doing their job of educating the city's children.

In 1981, Chicago United, which describes itself as "an alliance of minority and majority businesses dedicated to improving race relations and economic and social conditions in Chicago," undertook a massive analysis of the management of the Chicago Public Schools. Top-level corporate executives of several major Chicago corporations took part. According to Warren Bacon, executive director of Chicago United at the time, "we thought of it as a cooperative relationship: the Board of Education was the client, and we were there to assist them. We said, we're not educators, but we know about management; to the extent that huge management problems are standing in the way of education, we can help."

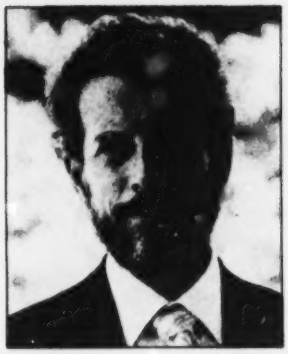
From that purely management perspective, the executives found major problems in many areas of board operations, ranging from recruitment, training, and supervision of new teachers, to the administration of real estate, transportation, warehousing, food service, and insurance. "Behind it all," says Bacon, "was one of the worst bureaucracies you've ever seen." The executives found that "the system is bogged down by far too many administrative and operational details to devote sufficient attention to long-range policy matters. As a result, system man-



By 1987, the Chicago Public Schools had been subjected to detailed analysis and criticism from many quarters.

agers do not have a policy framework from which to develop specific performance objectives. In addition, the board has no measurements to use in gauging the effectiveness of individual programs, schools, or the system as a whole."

The executives came out with a set of 253 recommendations, beginning with "Strengthen the role of district superintendents and principals" and "Restructure the central office" all the way to "Reduce the contract compliance exception to $5,000." While obviously the recommendations varied widely in scope and specificity, the gist, according to Bacon, was that the system "was too centralized, that more authority and responsibility had to be directed to the local level, that you had to make decisions at the lowest level where people know what's going on." That thrust reflected, in part, a new emphasis in American business that calls for putting more authority in the hands of local managers and more employee participation in decision-making; it also reflected a sense that human service delivery systems, in particular, work best with decentralized decision-making.



Fred Hess: "Our major role was focusing the attention of the city on the inadequacy of the school system."

The executives agreed to work with the board to follow through on the recommendations. For two to three years after the report, according to Bacon, the executives provided technical assistance to school officials on implementation.

However, in 1987, when Chicago United returned to evaluate the implementation efforts, they found decidedly mixed results. On the one hand, some 60 percent of the recommendations, they found, had been implemented or "partially implemented" (and another 10 percent were deemed no longer valid). On the other hand, the audit report charged, "the most important recommendations of the 1981 report were not implemented or were buried in classic obfuscation." These were the recommendations aimed at breaking down the huge central bureaucracy and transferring power to the local school level. Not only had the central administration not been reduced, "administrative ranks have been swelled to an intolerable degree." The result was to further reduce the authority and flexibility of district superintendents and principals, and to choke teachers in paperwork to feed the bureaucracy.

The audit concluded: "Without any doubt, we observe a totally topsy-turvy situation. The most important educational decisions should be made at the local level by parents and community together with teachers and principal. But they have been abrogated by administrators at central headquarters. The alternative view is possible, viable, and managerially sound." To achieve a reformed system, Chicago United pledged to "mobilize community support and marshall all available resources."

Behind the strong language in the audit was a shift in attitude on the part of the business leaders who had committed so much time and energy to the original task force. According to Bacon, "When we saw they were not serious about substantial change, our attitude changed. We didn't view [the board] as a client-consultant relation anymore. We said, 'We're taxpaying citizens. If you can't do the job, move aside.' " Business leaders' increasing impatience with the board's failure to educate job-ready citizens, combined with their disillusionment about the board's capability or willingness to reform itself, became a critical force pushing reform efforts to change the structure of the schools by legislative fiat.

Problems with the school bureaucracy were also detailed in a series of reports by the Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance. The Panel is a coalition of some 19 community and civic organizations created after the board's fiscal crisis of 1979. Its original function was to serve as a watchdog group: to analyze and interpret board budgetary and other figures in ways that the public could understand and act upon.

Closely examining system staffing patterns and budgets, the Panel discovered that a disproportionate share of the job cuts during the financial crisis had fallen on teachers and other system employees who worked directly with children, rather than on administrative staff. Another study five years later found that the administrative bureaucracy grew in each year between 1981 and 1987, while total school enrollment was dropping. Further, the Panel found that the board was diverting almost one-third of Chapter 1 money—some $42 million—supposed to be targeted to schools serving disadvantaged students, to support the central administration under the heading "program support." The Panel studies backed up the Chicago United perception that the board bureaucracy was getting worse, not better.

The Panel also issued other reports documenting problems in the schools. Notable among these was its revelation that 43 percent of students entering a freshman class dropped out before graduating, and that in some inner-city schools, the dropout rate hit 67 percent. Fred Hess, executive director of the Panel, says that documenting such problems was the most important role played by the Panel in the reform process: "our major role was focusing the attention of the city on the inadequacy of the school system."

The Panel report on dropouts was issued around the same time as another report from the school advocacy group Designs for Change. Designs was founded in 1977 as a research and advocacy group by Don Moore, who has a doctorate in education from Harvard. After several years primarily devoted to research on national issues such as school finance and the role of advocacy groups in producing change, Designs began to get directly involved in Chicago school issues in the early 1980s—among other things, by writing Harold Washington's transition papers on education and organizing parents school-by-school to press for local, school-level reforms. Its 1982 report "Caught in the Web" documented a widespread pattern of misclassifying minority students into classes for the mentally retarded. Designs' 1985 report found even higher overall attrition rates than the Panel (53 percent), but showed that of those students who stayed in school, slightly less than one-third were reading at the twelfth-grade level by the time they graduated. In other words, of the 39,500 students entering high school in 1984, only 6,000 could be expected to graduate four years later reading at grade level. The fate of students at neighborhood high schools (as distinct

Ten Ingredients of an Effective School

1. Principal is educational leader—The principal provides strong leadership and works toward clear educational goals for the school.

2. Safe attractive school—The staff creates an atmosphere in the school that is orderly, safe, serious, and attractive—without being oppressive.

3. Staff combats truancy and dropout—The school makes serious efforts to reduce truancy and dropout.

4. Parents work to improve the learning program—Parents involve themselves in improving the educational program and the school welcomes parent participation and responds to parent concerns.

5. Staff believes students can learn—The principal and teachers firmly believe that their students can learn as well as anybody, and they work hard to make that happen.

6. Learning to read is the first priority—The school staff defines learning to read in its broadest sense as the school's first priority, and uses all school subjects and resources to make sure that this happens.

7. Student time is spent mostly on learning activities—School schedules and day-to-day practices of all school staff help children spend as much time as possible actively involved in learning activities.

8. Frequent checks of student progress—The principal and teachers check frequently to see how well children are learning, and use this information to make the educational program more effective.

9. Staff development is tied to specific school goals—Staff development programs help teachers achieve the priority educational goals for the school.

10. Special programs are carefully designed—Special programs (bilingual education, special education, Chapter I, and so on) are of high quality, are carefully matched to student needs, and are coordinated closely with the overall learning program of the school.

Based on "effective schools" research, this list appeared in the 1985 report, "The Bottom Line: Chicago's Failing Schools and How to Save Them," by Designs for Change.

from selective schools and programs) was even more bleak: fewer than one out of twelve students entering as freshmen managed to graduate reading at grade level.

By 1985, moreover, Designs for Change had gone beyond merely documenting such problems. It had begun its own parent organizing effort, Chicago Schoolwatch, focused in 40 schools in black and Hispanic neighborhoods. It was also building a comprehensive reform agenda, based on national "effective schools" research. That research examined schools in minority and low-income communities that were, by most measures, educating children effectively; it sought to identify the key ingredients of success *(see box below at left)*. Thus, besides calling attention to school problems, Designs was beginning to push an alternative vision. Designs founder Don Moore says, "We had a well-worked-out advocacy strategy, based on our research, that from 1983 on we were trying to apply."

Thus, prior to 1987, Chicago United, the Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance, and Designs for Change had produced a devastating critique of the way Chicago's schools were being run and the education they were providing to the city's children. That critique had been picked up and publicized by the local press; the Panel's dropout report, for example, drew front-page banner headlines in the *Chicago Sun-Times*. In addition, Designs for Change had begun its own organizing effort and its own reform agenda; and Chicago United, with its considerable resources and influence, was pledging a major public campaign for school reform.

Organizing for Change

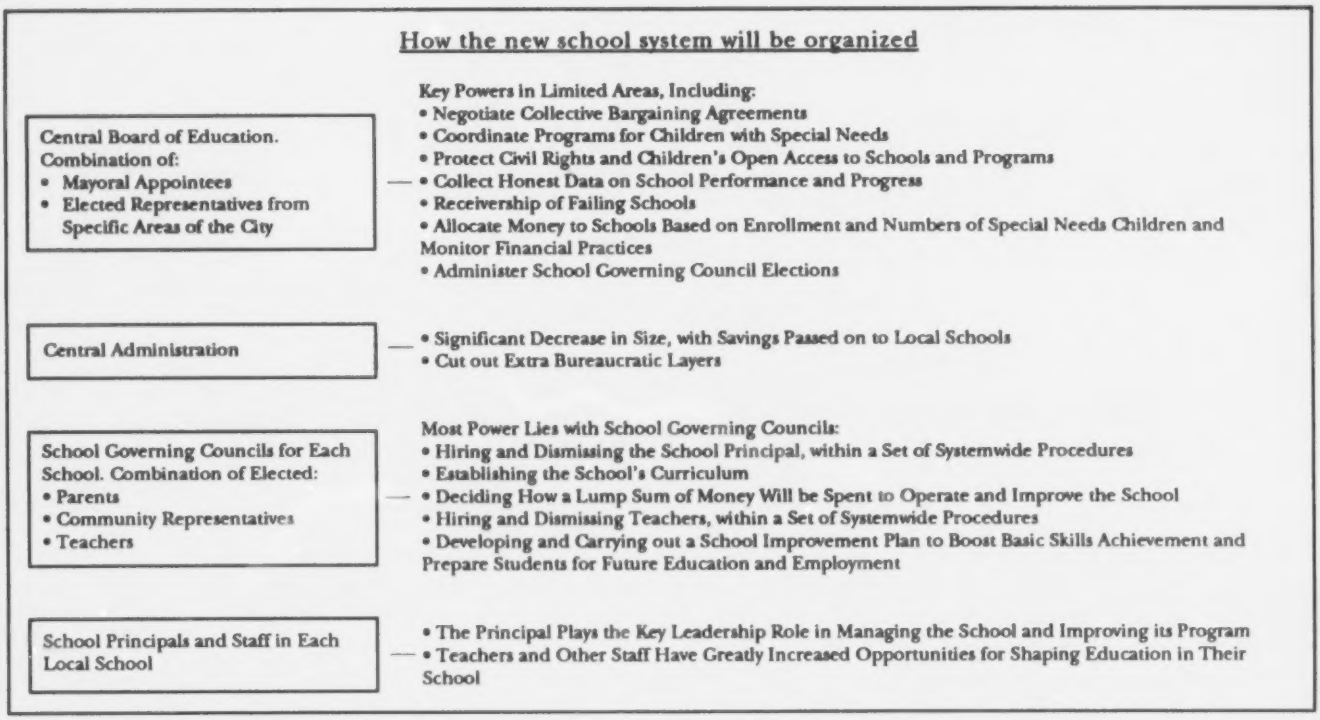
Besides documentation of problems, the other crucial work that had been begun prior to 1987 was basic organizing around school issues.

School issues were a prime focus of the civil rights movement in Chicago. The Coordinating Council of Community Organizations, led by Al Raby, organized demonstrations and boycotts in the 1960s to protest patterns of segregation that had white children in half-empty schools while black children were crowded into temporary units (dubbed "Willis Wagons," after then-Superintendent Ben Willis). Two decades later, the appointment of two white women to replace minority members of the school board helped galvanize black opposition to Mayor Jane Byrne, which ultimately led to the election of Harold Washington.

At the school level, too, there have traditionally been activist parents pushing for change: people like Ida Mae Fletcher, allied with reform-minded principal Joe Rosen in Lawndale, would pressure the Board of Education to get more resources for local schools. Current Third Ward alderman Dorothy Tillman first came to public notice leading parent protests at Mollison School; Ben Kendrick, of Marcy Newberry, first became an activist on education issues while participating in a three-month boycott of Hess Upper Grade Center on the West Side.

In the 1970s, The Woodlawn Organization (TWO) began an effort to revitalize Hyde Park High School as part of an overall neighborhood revitalization plan; says Leon Finney, long-time (now retired) TWO executive director, "We wanted Woodlawn to become a stable community, a community of choice, not one of last resort; and that led us back to the schools. What kind of high school could you have that would attract people who have a choice?" A local planning group, involving TWO representatives and parents but also members of the Board of Education and what Finney calls "people who could make things happen," came up with a plan for Hyde Park Career Academy. With new leadership and an extra $500,000 per year appropriation from the board, the school improved dramatically. Reflecting on the process, Finney says, "Parents by themselves would not have been able to pull it off, because their kids graduate and they move on. You have to have a stabilizing force. Where you have strong community organizations, that's where you will find the greatest change."

Other community organizations, however, were less enthusiastic about getting involved in school issues. United Neighborhood Organization, a coalition of community groups in prima-


How the new school system will be organized
Central Board of Education. Combination of:
• Mayoral Appointees
• Elected Representatives from Specific Areas of the City
Key Powers in Limited Areas, Including:
• Negotiate Collective Bargaining Agreements
• Coordinate Programs for Children with Special Needs
• Protect Civil Rights and Children's Open Access to Schools and Programs
• Collect Honest Data on School Performance and Progress
• Receivership of Failing Schools
• Allocate Money to Schools Based on Enrollment and Numbers of Special Needs Children and Monitor Financial Practices
• Administer School Governing Council Elections
Central Administration
• Significant Decrease in Size, with Savings Passed on to Local Schools
• Cut out Extra Bureaucratic Layers
School Governing Councils for Each School. Combination of Elected:
• Parents
• Community Representatives
• Teachers
Most Power Lies with School Governing Councils:
• Hiring and Dismissing the School Principal, within a Set of Systemwide Procedures
• Establishing the School's Curriculum
• Deciding How a Lump Sum of Money Will be Spent to Operate and Improve the School
• Hiring and Dismissing Teachers, within a Set of Systemwide Procedures
• Developing and Carrying out a School Improvement Plan to Boost Basic Skills Achievement and Prepare Students for Future Education and Employment
School Principals and Staff in Each Local School
• The Principal Plays the Key Leadership Role in Managing the School and Improving its Program
• Teachers and Other Staff Have Greatly Increased Opportunities for Shaping Education in Their School

The CURE plan, presented at a citywide conference in April 1987.

rily Mexican neighborhoods, had tackled problems in individual schools in the past but, from an organizer's standpoint, found them difficult to deal with. "The situation in the schools has always been bad," says UNO executive director Danny Solis, "but when you try to organize around them, you find you're just putting a band-aid on the problem"; Peter Martinez, an UNO consultant, says "whenever we got involved in educational issues, things would get all mushed up." UNO's organizing philosophy stresses picking winnable issues to build leadership and organizational power; but the school board bureaucracy baffled attempts to achieve quick, definable victories; and a single success in one school might not last, or make a real long-term difference—and wouldn't affect other problem schools at all. Meanwhile, says Solis, "every time we'd have a winning issue, the leader would be hired by the board." (That complaint is echoed by others with a history of working on school issues. People's Coalition leader Coretta McFerren, talking of earlier school protest movements, recalls, "the system was buying us off. They would hire people who made too much noise, hire them as TAs [teacher's aides], clerks ... The bureaucracy would eat you up, people would get lost in it." James Deanes, of the PCC, recalls the same dynamic of "professional parents" who, "once they got inside, became strangely silent.") Solis came out of these earlier reform efforts convinced that "we were no match for our opponents" [i.e., the board] and that to have any real impact on the schools, "we would need to make alliances"—something UNO had traditionally been reluctant to do.

One community organizing effort that became an important precursor to the school reform movement was a wave of protests, in 1984-85, over gang-related deaths in black and Hispanic neighborhoods. The killing of Simeon High School basketball star Ben Wilson in December 1984 dramatized the problem and led Mayor Washington to appoint an anti-gang task force, headed by Ben Kendrick, out of which came the Community Intervention Network. This network of community-based agencies put many people working on youth issues in touch with each other (according to Kendrick, this became the nucleus of the People's Coalition). Tomas Sanabria, of Network for Youth Services, recalls that concern over gangs led directly to concern over the schools. A study by Rev. Charles Kyle showed that fewer than 30 percent of students entering local high schools were graduating. Says Sanabria: "Our reasoning was, the kids are not in school because the schools are horrible. Instead the kids are on the streets, in gangs, in trouble. And that means our community is in trouble—in trouble because of the schools." Another anti-gang effort was the Black-on-Black Love campaign, headed by Ed Gardner—whose brother Frank Gardner later became head of the Board of Education.

The anti-gang movement succeeded in winning passage of a variety of bills in 1984-85, establishing Safe School Zones, free summer schools, and some alternative programs. These were modest successes, says Sanabria; but the broader questions of how to create real structural change in the schools remained. Another feature of the 1985 legislation was the mandating of "School Report Cards." These cards showed how each school measured up, in areas such as reading scores and graduation rates, to schools elsewhere. Miguel del Valle, who was one of the activists pushing for the 1985 legislation and later became a state senator, recalls that the school report cards were a crucial tool that "helped expose the problems [in the schools] for everyone to see." They were given prominence by the media; the October 1987 report card, for example, revealed that students in 35 of Chicago's 64 high schools had scored in the lowest percentile; it was published just before Secretary Bennett made his "worst in

the nation" remark.

Other 1985 legislation created local school improvement councils and gave parents, teachers, and community members the right to examine school budgets. The councils were given control over spending of "discretionary" funds, and the right to pass on the school's overall budget; if they disapproved, the board was supposed to modify the budget to reflect their concerns. However, the board failed to take the reform legislation seriously. It failed to convene the citywide council called for in the bill—thus keeping dissidents in local schools isolated from each other. "Discretionary" spending was interpreted extremely narrowly (despite protests from the Chicago Panel); and recommendations made by parents and teachers at budget hearings were simply ignored, with no changes made to any school budgets as a result.

The board's intransigence angered both reformers and legislators. At a series of followup legislative hearings, representatives of the Panel and parents labelled the budget process a sham. Don Moore, Designs director, recalls the general reaction that "the board was stonewalling. We'd make a little gain here, get pushed back there." By the summer of 1986, frustrated reformers were coming to the conclusion that "it was time to push for restructuring of the whole system." In fall of 1986, both the Panel and Designs began researching school decentralization and school-based management in other cities.

At about this time, Michael Bakalis, Dean of Loyola University School of Education and former Illinois Superintendent of Education, was looking to build a coalition to restructure and decentralize the city's schools. Bakalis originally favored the model of New York's 20 independent school districts, but Designs convinced him to switch the emphasis to school-level decision-making, and then signed on to the coalition. The other key member was the Save Our Neighborhoods/Save Our City coalition, an alliance of community and parish groups from mostly white neighborhoods on the city's northwest and southwest sides. The coalition called itself CURE (Chicagoans United to Reform Education). UNO flirted with joining the CURE coalition, but stayed away.

In April 1987, CURE held a citywide conference at Loyola University that drew 400 people. Its position paper ("Needed: A New School System for Chicago") called for local school councils with authority to hire (and fire) the principal and teachers, establish curriculum, control lump-sum budgeting, and develop a school improvement plan; principals and teachers would have more say in running their schools, and the size and power of the central administration would be lessened *(see box on previous page)*. Designs' Joan Slay vowed at the conference, "We are going to start a citywide people's campaign like nothing you've ever seen before around the public schools in Chicago."

1987 also saw another legislative attempt, this one by the Chicago Panel, to phase in a form of school-based governance, with local councils gradually assuming control over budget, curriculum, and school operations. The bill passed the House but was killed in the Senate because of opposition both from predictable quarters (the board and the CTU) and from Designs for Change.

Thus by early 1987, there was a history of organizing around school issues that had produced a few modest changes, both at individual schools and legislatively. But many of the key groups who had worked on school issues had come round to believing that the school board would stifle any attempts at reform, that broad structural change was necessary, and that groups needed to build coalitions and work together in order to make any impact.

The Political Context

1987 was an election year in Chicago, the year that marked the consolidation in power of Harold Washington, the city's first black mayor.

Washington was first elected in 1983 as a result of a massive voter registration drive (and voter turnout) in African-American neighborhoods, combined with strong Hispanic support and a split in the white vote. For three years after his election, white aldermen hostile to the mayor controlled the city council and blocked Washington's program; but after court-ordered reapportionment, Hispanic wards elected aldermen allied with Washington, and in 1986 he took control of the council. As the election of 1987 rolled around, Washington had consolidated his power (and his personal popularity was high), but it was clear he would face a stiff challenge for re-election. One issue that he would clearly be vulnerable on was schools.

Thom Clark photo

The school issue was not an easy one for Mayor Washington. It potentially involved two elements of his constituency on opposite sides.

The school issue was not an easy one for Washington. It potentially involved two elements of his constituency on opposite sides. On the one hand, Washington's election had enormously energized neighborhood and grassroots organizations in Chicago. Many of them had worked for his election and saw his victory as a triumph of grassroots organizing over the old machine politics. Moreover, the Washington administration was sympathetic to neighborhood organizations and issues; city departments and the mayor himself gave them access to City Hall and a modest measure of influence on city policies. These groups were starting to get energized around school reform; and the strike, as we have seen, resulted in an enormous burst of grassroots parent organizing.

On the other hand, many of Washington's core middle class supporters (and financial backers) were Board of Education employees: administrators, principals, and teachers. Any move to cut central administration jobs—one of the reform groups' key proposals—would involve laying off black people in significant numbers. Moreover, public education was one of the few institutions in Chicago controlled by blacks (Manford Byrd, School Board President Frank Gardner, and CTU President Jacqueline Vaughn are all African-American). All those jobs and administrative positions had been hard-won by blacks in struggles over the years; a full-fledged assault on them, particularly one involving white business groups, would be politically difficult for the mayor. His policy advisor, Hal Baron, comments that the

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school jobs issue was "a tremendous political problem" for Washington. "School jobs were an entree to the middle class for many blacks; you have churches where one-third or one-half of the deacons are professional educators. [Gaining those jobs] was a major accomplishment for the black community." In tackling education reform, "you needed to create a process where these people could participate; or, if they wouldn't, you needed to have a record to show that they were a roadblock."

There was another, more formal reason that the schools were a potential minefield for Washington. Although as Mayor he appointed the school board, he had little direct authority over the schools. Previous reform efforts had struggled to get the schools out of politics; during the strike, for example, Washington took the position that the mayor shouldn't intervene in negotiations between the board and the unions, that it was Mayor Richard J. Daley's intervention on strikes that had set up the patterns that led to the 1979 fiscal crisis. Hal Baron says that Washington was willing to be a cheerleader, fundraiser, critic for the schools, and to have a public process for board appointments, "but he would not accept responsibility for setting goals for a system in which he lacked the authority to enforce implementation."

Washington's solution was to appoint, in fall 1986, an Education Summit. This brought together 50 people: business leaders, representatives of established community organizations, and educational activists together with the board, the union, and representatives of higher education. The idea, according to Baron, was to create something with "institutional weight" that would commit to some specific plan for boosting school achievement.

The model that was bandied about was the "Boston compact": a proposal under which business leaders would commit to provide jobs for a set number of graduates if the schools would commit in return to boosting student achievement—i.e., making sure the hirees would be qualified to enter the labor market. The specific proposal put on the table, according to published reports, would have committed businesses to hire 1,000 public high school graduates in 1988, rising to 5,000 by 1992; in return, business leaders wanted commitments to boost student achievements to national norms over five years and reduce dropouts to the national level by ten years.

Supt. Manford Byrd rejected the proposal. He was unwilling to commit to boosting student achievement in order to get the job commitment. One participant quotes him as blaming school failures on the students: "We've got an excellent system; if you give us New Trier students, we'll have good outcomes." Byrd demanded instead that the business leaders help boost the system's revenues by $100 million, arguing that new achievement goals could not be reached without infusion of more funds. Business leaders refused, citing their previous reform recommendations and arguing that the schools needed to reorganize existing resources, and especially cut the bureaucratic waste, in order to get the job done.

Byrd and other top board leaders had also turned thumbs down on another Summit-inspired initiative, this one led by their old nemesis, the teachers union. The CTU had been investigating various schemes for bringing more authority to the local school level, or what the union calls "school-based management." The concept had been tried out, with union cooperation, in a number of other school systems, according to the CTU's John Kotsakis. The union drafted its own plan for a pilot program, and, in cooperation with Chicago United, invited educators from other cities to a one-day conference in June to explore the possibilities; business, union, and board representatives were all invited. "Byrd didn't show," remembers Kotsakis, "he went instead to Taste of Chicago. Neither did half the board people we invited, and those who did come didn't stay. By mid-afternoon we were talking to ourselves."

Byrd's outright resistance to such reform initiatives brought this first phase of the Education Summit to an effective dead end in the summer of 1987. Business leaders were disgusted; Harris Bank chairman Kenneth West recalls being "turned off by the whole thing." Meanwhile, Harold Washington had been reelected in April—the schools issue had not hurt him with his core constituency—and it looked as though school advocacy efforts were grinding down once again. To make matters worse, the board was deadlocked in negotiations with the teachers and allied unions; it seemed clear that not only would the schools not be reformed—they wouldn't even open for the new school year.

By the summer of 1987, however, several pieces were in place that made school reform possible.

First, there had been painstaking—and well-publicized—documentation of the problems of the Chicago Public Schools; when Secretary Bennett called them "worst in the nation," he only said out loud what many Chicagoans already believed.

Second, there was an idea surfacing from several places outlining what needed to be done to change the situation: cut the power of the central bureaucracy and bring more authority (and responsibility) for educating children to the local school level.

Third, there was a history of organizing around the schools that had produced some promising networks—the CURE coalition and the network of groups working on gang and dropout prevention—but had also left other groups frustrated and searching for new ways to tackle the issue.

Fourth, there was a formal vehicle in place—the Education Summit.

Fifth, across the spectrum of people concerned about the schools, there was skepticism that top board officials could lead any kind of reform effort. Business leaders, in particular, were angered after years of trying to work with the system to bring about change. And legislators were angered that earlier reform legislation had been stifled at the implementation stage.

Thus all the elements were in place, by summer of 1987, that became the Chicago school reform movement. Like Chicago in the fall of 1871, it only needed a spark to set it off. The school strike provided that spark.

CHAPTER 3: The Movement

The school strike, as we have seen in Chapter 1, was the critical event that transformed discontent into action. It undermined the already low credibility of the two chief educational institutions, the board and the union; ignited grassroots organizing among parents around the city; and presented reform advocates a tremendous opportunity to harness popular discontent into political action.

The next eight months—from the end of the strike in October of 1987 through May of 1988—saw tremendous energies poured into the effort to find a better way to structure the schools and hold them accountable for educating the city's children. It is a confusing time to chronicle, because so much happened and so many people got involved: participants themselves didn't know, from week to week, who would show up at meetings and what new schemes would be put forward.

Out of all the confusion, however, it is possible to identify two central lines of action. One was the public process, centered around the Education Summit and especially its newly appointed subgroup, the Parent/Community Council. The other was the organizing, strategizing, coalition-building, and lobbying that brought the CURE coalition, the People's Coalition, UNO and representatives of the business community together around a common agenda for legislative action. Both of these strands were critical. The Summit process channeled enormous popular energies into a commitment to restructure the schools; and when the Summit foundered because of weak city leadership, the reform coalition was positioned to move into the vacuum.

The Summit Process and the Parent/Community Council

The first sign that the end of the strike would not mean return to business-as-usual came on Sunday, October 11, a week after the strike ended. Mayor Washington called for a public meeting on reforming the schools at the University of Illinois/Chicago campus. Five hundred people were invited; more than 1,000 showed up. Susan Hirsch, a PURE member, recalls "it was the first time everyone came together, and we saw how many of us there were"; Ben Kendrick, who helped facilitate the event, says "we were shocked at the number of people who showed up and at finding so many groups that agreed with us." Kotsakis, of the teachers union, remembers the session as an ominous portent of things to come: "They invited the community organizations, the Urban League, Operation PUSH, Pilsen Neighbors, CURE, PURE, SURE, the whole gang. I said to Jackie [Vaughn, CTU president], 'this is the Coliseum, and I don't want to be the Christians.' " (The teachers, Kotsakis recalls, made sure to send enough of their own people to prevent being eaten alive.)

It was a noisy, contentious afternoon, one the *Chicago Tribune* called "the most remarkable gathering to focus on the Chicago public schools in at least 25 years." Washington, Vaughn, and board president Frank Gardner all spoke; Byrd was not asked to do so. Washington pledged himself to "a thorough and complete overhaul of the system," promised to appoint a parents advisory council to carry it out, and vowed "I'm not going to turn around until it's resolved."

By early November, Washington had followed through on appointing the 54-member Parent/Community Council (PCC), led by West Side parent James Deanes. The original Summit had included representatives of established community groups such as the Urban League and the Latino Institute, as well as formal parent groups like the PTA, but its central dynamic was clearly between the board and the business community. The PCC, on the other hand, brought together a much broader sampling of parent and community leaders. Some were familiar names from previous school struggles (Tee Gallay, for example, was president of the Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance) but others—though they had been active on school issues—were relatively unknown outside their own neighborhoods.

The Summit process channeled enormous popular energies into a commitment to restructure the schools; and when the Summit foundered because of weak city leadership, the reform coalition was positioned to move into the vacuum.

James Deanes had been chairman of the District 7 Council on the West Side and part of the group led by Leon Finney that brought pressure to get the strike settled. When Harold Washington called him to his office to talk about chairing the PCC, Deanes was, in his words, "in awe." What did Washington say? "He lied," says Deanes, recalling the mayor's promise that the work would take "no more than six or seven hours a week." More important, the Mayor told Deanes that the critical task was to "reach out": "I know what you can do in a meeting with the brothers," Deanes quotes Washington as saying, "but can you work with the North Side? Can you go out across the city and find out what the people are saying—not just black folks, and not just

parents, but people who pay taxes and don't have children in the schools? Can you stick it out to the end?" Deanes recalls: "He looked at me in that way he had, even when he was laughing, that piercing look that said, you cannot be weak, I need you to drive this process. Under that stare, I could do anything."

Appointing the PCC was the last step Harold Washington took on school reform. Within days, on November 25, 1987, Washington died of a massive heart attack; some of the letters formally appointing PCC members arrived at their homes after his death.

Washington's death had a complex and powerful effect on the school reform movement. On the one hand, many of the reformers, who had been staunch Washington supporters, were

James Deanes and other PCC members drew an enormous amount of inspiration from the belief that the fallen mayor had personally appointed them to lead a crusade to save the schools.

devastated; several, when asked whether there was any point at which they felt reform might not prevail, answered simply "when Harold died." Deanes recalls his own anger and disappointment: "We had so much to do, we were just getting going, there was all this animosity getting stirred up—I thought he'd be there to calm folks down." But Deanes and other PCC members drew an enormous amount of inspiration from the belief that the fallen mayor had personally appointed them to lead a crusade to save the schools; Deanes, speaking at a memorial service the night of the mayor's funeral, said, "We want our work to be a legacy of the mayor." Others in the school reform movement also, to lesser degrees, drew inspiration from Washington's strong rhetoric championing grassroots and community-based efforts.

On the other hand, Washington's death also removed the most powerful figure in city politics. It created a vacuum at the top, as Acting Mayor Eugene Sawyer was unable to build solid support from any one sector of the city. The result was that the city government was effectively removed from the position of being able to control the reform process or protect the Board of Education jobs and clout. The reformers were on their own to take the process as far as it would go. Washington's death also touched off a power struggle within the black community, as supporters of Ald. Tim Evans challenged Sawyer. The struggle over the mayoralty consumed black leadership during the critical period when the school reform effort was coming to a climax, and helps explain why some black leaders such as Leon Finney, with a long history of activism on schools, played so little a role in writing the landmark reform legislation.

The PCC's first initiative was to organize a series of ten neighborhood meetings throughout December, attended by hundreds of people, at which ideas for reforming the schools surfaced by the dozens. Written proposals came in from numerous groups *(a summary of the key proposals was published in the January 1988 issue of The Neighborhood Works—see next page)* and were reviewed by the PCC. There was great variety in the proposals but some common themes: more local authority and local accountability (though "decentralization" had both supporters and opponents), the need to do something about nonperforming teachers, and extra resources for schools where children are at risk of failing.

Then, working through December and January, the PCC created its own plan for reform. The group met in marathon sessions several times a week and on weekends (only an impassioned plea by one exhausted member to "respect the Lord's Day" blocked a meeting on Super Bowl Sunday). After a series of nighttime writing sessions at the offices of the child advocacy group Voices for Illinois Children, the PCC had its plan in place by the January 23 deadline—a remarkable achievement, given the size of the task, the short time frame, and the fact that many of the members had never met before joining the group. The PCC report called for a broad range of measures to boost student achievement. They included multicultural and bilingual education, better support services, teacher remediation, improved training for principals, teachers and parents.

The central proposal was creation of school governing boards, composed of principal, staff, parents and community members, with a majority of parents; the boards would have control over the school budget, textbooks, curriculum, and hiring and firing of principals. School governing boards would choose members of district boards, which would in turn choose a central board, with additional members appointed by the mayor; the central board would have authority over labor negotiations, a core curriculum and performance standards, central administrative functions, and issues such as compliance with legal mandates on desegregation, special education, and the like. It's noteworthy, as one PCC member points out, that the PCC did not push decentralization: "No one on PCC even wanted to talk about breaking the system up."

The idea had been that each of the other main groups represented on the Summit (the board, the union, and the business community) would present its own reform plan, all to be crafted together into the final plan by a group of educational consultants. However, fired with a populist resistance to "experts," the PCC insisted that its plan go directly to the Summit without reinterpretation. The group's ten chosen representatives took the PCC plan to the full Summit, where it quickly became the central document debated by the Summit as a whole.

The Summit meetings in early 1988 were, by the account of participants, extraordinary. Some very different elements of Chicago were coming together in one room, almost for the first time. James Deanes remembers "being with businessmen, bankers, people who don't walk into a room, they sweep into a room. I've never talked to a bank president—I talk to the loan officer. And there was Ernest Barefield, who ran the city under Washington. And board members—not just listening to you while you give a two-minute speech [i.e., at board public meetings], but in a situation where you could talk to them, interrupt." Ken West, of Harris Bank, remembers the scene from the opposite side: "We'd meet in the City Council chamber, and the businessmen would all sit in one place, almost stereotypical, all white males. I looked over at the others and thought, they've got to be suspicious of us, why we're in this. The first time I ever heard Coretta [McFerren, one of the PCC's representatives], I thought, this woman is crazy... And James Deanes, this angry black guy, there was no reason at all for him to trust me: he had the

Community Proposals for Reforming the Chicago Public Schools

Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance, Fred Hess

School autonomy through school management councils ($^1/_2$ staff, $^1/_2$ parent and community) with significant control over curriculum policy, budget, and advice on staff. Policies for implementing "effective schools" philosophy and for improving teaching through retraining, internships, and financial incentives. Schools to serve local communities. Better target dollars to most needy kids.

Chicago Partnership: Chicago Business Community Position on Restructuring Schools, Pat Keleher, Chicago United

Significant decrease in central administration. Substantial governance and administration by Local School Improvement Councils (LSICs). Parental choice and competition among schools. Ongoing training for teachers and administrators and for parent and community representatives. Transfer state-of-the-art educational research from colleges to school classrooms.

Chicago Teachers Union

More effective ways to evaluate teacher performance (no parental involvement); new process for teacher remediation and dismissal. Increase professional standards through internships, peer assistance, and career and salary incentives. Decrease class size. Voluntary school-based management in pilot schools.

Chicagoans United to Reform Education (CURE), Don Moore, Joan Slay, Designs for Change

School site management as context for "effective schools" practices. LSICs ($^1/_3$ staff, $^1/_3$ community, $^1/_3$ parents) have responsibility to hire and dismiss principal and teachers within systemwide guidelines, and establish school budget and curriculum. Central board to guarantee rights of special needs children and civil rights, and to collect honest data.

Concerned Parents Network/Believe in the Public Schools, Francoise Friedman

State legislation to expand powers of LSICs to advise and consent on principal appointment, budget, curriculum. Increase accountability by giving district superintendents and principals five-year renewable contracts; teachers to be recertified every ten years, evaluated every two years. Decrease class size. Merit pay for teachers.

46th Ward Fair Share Education Committee: Reconstruct Education with Students, Educators and Community Together (RESPECT), Anne Cline

Opposes decentralization because of threat to educational equity, rights of minorities, desegregation. Favors more accountability through citywide school inspectorate/ombudsman independent of school superintendent. Pay members of Board of Education.

People's Coalition for Educational Reform, Tomas Sanabria

School-based governance with parent and community control. Drastic reduction in central bureaucracy. Principals to have two-year renewable contracts. Educational reform especially in social studies to stress equal educational opportunity and respect for cultural differences.

Parents United for Responsible Education (PURE), Bernie Noven

No cuts in staff with face-to-face contact with children; no cuts without public disclosure. Significant autonomy to local school community. Major cuts in central and district offices and elimination of field-level operations. Accountability of principals and teachers. Increase dollars going to local school operations only after significant structural reforms.

31st Ward Fair Share Organization, Emile Schepers

Opposes decentralization. More responsiveness in curriculum and teacher attitudes; local school responsible to achieve real partnership with community. End tracking. Re-fund education.

Taxpayers for Responsible Education (TRUE), Richard Long

Decentralization to 20 District School Governance Boards, members to be elected from seven subzones in each district; subcommittee of District Board to run each local school; central board to be composed of representatives from each district. Focus on building the school and the school community both educationally and economically.

United Neighborhoods Intertwined for Total Equality (UNITE); Black Urbanite's Itinerary for Life Development Through Education (BUILDED), Jean Oden

Clearly defined responsibilities for principals, teachers, students, and parents. Parents to advise on curriculum, budget, etc. Eliminate high school districts and field superintendents, reduce role of central administration. Central citizen advisory council (elected) to choose Board of Education.

Voices for Illinois Children, Malcolm Bush

School site governance through staff-parent-community council. Significant extra funding for schools after local school restructuring. Extra resources for children considered educationally at risk; early childhood education in schools, day care centers, home day care.

This summary of written plans presented to the PCC was published in the January 1988 issue of The Neighborhood Works; it indicated to tremendous grassroots energy working to redesign the school system.

stereotype of the business leader strongly impressed on him. But I looked at him, and realized, here he is missing work to come to this meeting." Deanes: "I'm no fan of the business community. But there was Ken West, probably one of the best people I've ever met, saying to me, why don't parents trust us, take us at our word?" West: "It was the Summit meetings that introduced business leaders to the reform groups. It was magic. Here was a bunch of people with such diverse backgrounds, interests, eco-

Parents and community members organized by the ABCs Coalition rallied at the Bismarck Hotel on June 6 before going down to Springfield to lobby for reform legislation. (Designs for Change photo)

nomic and political stature, through hours and hours of talking, listening to people, I started to say, well, Coretta's right on that one." Deanes: "At some point the business community became our best friends."

Through February and into March, the Summit fought through the details of a plan to restructure the schools along the lines suggested by the PCC. The alliance of parents and business leaders solidified. The board, and the unions, were edged to the sidelines. The Summit had originally operated on a consensus model, but Don Moore of Designs proposed that issues be decided by a majority vote; once that precedent was established, it was used repeatedly to isolate the board and the union and win support for reform planks; the PCC alone had ten votes.

John Kotsakis, representing the teachers union, recalls with disgust, "we had only two votes, and everybody's vote counted equally, whether you represented ten people or ten thousand. We had no negotiating room, no leverage: the parent organizations had all the votes. The board was in the same position: we were both shut out. We voted the same on many positions. A PCC consultant said to us, 'you're in bed with management'—one of the worst insults you can give a labor man. Not once did we meet with the board to fashion a solid position; we didn't want to be identified with them. Board members had lost control. Events were telescoping: every time they'd agree to something, people pushed them farther. Plus Byrd took positions that were absolutely stupid. And the Mayor's Office was tremendously inept at controlling the process."

By mid-March, negotiations were getting tougher ("all the easy agreements were made early on," recalls one participant). It was becoming unclear whether the Summit would be able to produce a reform plan with solid support to take to Springfield. A weekend retreat on March 19-20, however, succeeded in producing a compromise document, which was approved by the full group on March 23. The proposal called for establishment of local school councils with the authority to hire and fire principals, approve budgets, and participate in curriculum and education decisions; in addition, the agreement called for items such as reducing class size, establishing parent and teacher training centers, expanding early childhood programs, and increasing salaries to attract better teachers. One exception to the general support for the Summit agreement was Fred Hess, of the Chicago Panel; he felt the plan didn't have "real guts," that the role for the councils was still advisory, and that there were no incentives for teachers to make changes in the classroom that would really affect children. Other objections came from Bruce Berndt, representing Chicago principals. Berndt, by his own account a "johnny come lately" to the Summit (he complained that the Principals Association had never been invited) argued—in what was to become a familiar theme—that the principals were being held accountable for school performance without being given authority to control their staffs.

But the compromise was more seriously threatened by a proposal introduced by a group of business leaders, led by Peter Wilmott of Carson Pirie Scott. Business leaders had bought onto the idea of breaking the dead hand of the bureaucracy by shifting power to parents and the local school community. But some worried what would happen if local communities did not prove up to the task: with the central power severely weakened, what kind of backup would there be to intervene and save failing schools? Wilmott and others proposed creation of an "oversight authority," on the model of the School Finance Authority appointed in the wake of the 1979 fiscal crisis. The oversight authority, appointed by the mayor and legislative leaders, would have power to oversee the implementation of reform with sanctions to enforce its decisions.

Introduced late in the Summit process, the oversight proposal (with its unfortunate echoes of "overseer") infuriated some Summit leaders, and renewed their suspicions of business motives. James Deanes of the PCC recalls, "We had put control with parents, put decisions at the local level. Then they said [with the oversight proposal] you're too stupid to do it. That was an insult. We sat at the same table for hours and built this bond, and now you're going to destroy it? Why assume we'll mess it up? Why not assume we'll do fine?" The debate took on racial overtones, with black leaders such as Deanes and William Farrow, of the Board of Education, arguing that "elite" (read white business) groups had "messed up" the schools when they were in control but were now attempting to regain power of a minority-dominated system. But the business leaders (some of whom privately acknowledged the unfortunate timing of the proposal) remained determined to secure some kind of oversight authority as a fail-safe device in

a time of radical restructuring. The plan attracted editorial support from the *Sun-Times* and the *Tribune*, as well as endorsements from key legislators and the Illinois State Board of Education.

With the oversight authority still a matter of contention, the Summit plan was meanwhile being translated into legislation to take to Springfield. The task fell to Erwin France, a longtime political operative who had replaced Hal Baron and was working the education issue for Sawyer. France's team produced draft legislative language for presentation to the Summit on May 19. Their text watered down the agreement, especially in the key area of shifting power away from the central bureaucracy to local schools. The result infuriated Summit participants. Ken West recalls, "I got up at the meeting and said, 'I can't figure this out: we seemed to reach an agreement, and now I read this and it bears no semblance to what we agreed. Are we shaking hands or not?' " Coretta McFerren called the France document "a piece of tripe." Explanations ranged from incompetence to outright sabotage. In any case, the Summit voted unanimously to reject the text. The summit process was, to all intents and purposes, over.

While the Summit thus ended without the legislation many had hoped for, it had played a critical role in focusing public attention on the schools and building a consensus behind basic principles of reform. In particular, it was the place that the essential alliance, between business executives and parent and community leaders, was forged.

Meanwhile, by the time of the France fiasco, the momentum of school reform had shifted away from the formal Summit to an informal coalition, in effect a "rump group" of Summit members determined on radical change.

The ABCs Coalition

As we saw in Chapter Two, several groups had begun organizing around school issues, independent of the Summit process, in the months before the 1987 strike. The most important of these were the Poverty Task Force Coalition (later the People's Coalition), which included many groups that had been working on gang and dropout issues; and the CURE coalition (Chicagoans United to Reform Education), including Designs for Change and its allied parent groups, SON/SOC, and Dean Michael Bakalis, of Loyola's School of Education.

From the time the CURE plan was announced in April 1987, Designs for Change began carefully laying the groundwork to build political and popular support. Don Moore used every venue available to him. He served on the formal Summit from the beginning, less because he believed that it would come up with anything substantial than because he saw it as an opportunity to move the CURE agenda. He made informal presentations to anyone who would listen; one such presentation, at First National Bank, impressed David Paulus and others that the CURE plan might be an appropriate vehicle for business leaders to channel their increasing frustrations about reform. He worked to bring community groups, notably United Neighborhood Organization, into the coalition. During the strike, Designs spokespersons attended parent meetings wherever they could, bringing their own ideas for broader-based reform.

Moore also attracted considerable resources at a critical time. Designs had been funded for several years by major local foundations. 1987 brought a major new supporter: commodities trader Richard Dennis. Dennis had actually decided to support the work of Al Raby, a respected black leader who first came to prominence leading boycotts against segregation in Chicago schools in the 1960s. In 1987, Raby was the chief organizer of the Poverty Task Force, and was also a principal in a political consulting firm, the Haymarket Group. As the Poverty Task Force was making the decision to concentrate its energies on education (through its offshoot, the People's Coalition), Raby convinced Dennis to put up the money to secure the services of the Haymarket Group, including strategist Tom Coffey, lawyer Mary Dempsey, and Raby himself. Dennis contributed "several hundred thousand dollars," according to Don Moore, to support Designs' work on school reform. The money bought Haymarket's behind-the-scenes help, from fall of 1987 through the end of the legislative session, that proved extraordinarily important in building the coalition for reform and translating it into legislation.

"I do not blame [black school administrators] for the problems with education instituted while we were still being a maid in Miss Ann's house. But we do blame them for perpetuating the problem."

—Coretta McFerren

Meanwhile, Designs' lobbyist, Larry Suffredin, began arranging meetings, throughout Fall 1987, between CURE coalition leaders and key members of the Illinois legislature, many of whom were angry over the strike and the failure of previous reform efforts. Alternative plans for restructuring the schools—including a proposal to create an elected school board, which had been defeated once before, and another breaking the system into 20 autonomous districts on the New York model—were floating around in Springfield. Suffredin's work was aimed at building a basis of understanding and support among legislators for the CURE plan as the most workable reform option.

Suffredin meanwhile pushed to have the CURE plan drafted into legislation early, on the time-honored principle that the first, most comprehensive bill on the table would become the focus of future discussions. That task fell to the Haymarket group; throughout fall of 1987, weekly meetings at Haymarket's North Loop headquarters fleshed out the details of the bill.

By this time the CURE coalition had attracted a significant new partner, the People's Coalition for Education Reform. PCER was a critical addition: it added significant minority, community-based participation to what had previously been a white-dominated coalition. (Although Designs' "Schoolwatch" parent groups were concentrated in black and Hispanic schools, and although Designs itself had multiracial leadership with figures such as Renee Montoya and Joan Jeter Slay, it is often perceived as a white, "downtown" organization. Don Moore is white; so are

Dean Bakalis and leaders of SON/SOC.) Respected black and Hispanic leaders Sokoni Karanja, Ben Kendrick, and Tomas Sanabria joined the coalition, and with them came Coretta McFerren.

McFerren was, along with James Deanes of the PCC and Bernie Noven of PURE, the most forceful and articulate, and certainly the most visible parent leader (she is actually a grandparent) to emerge to prominence in the school reform movement. Like Deanes, she had a long history of working in local schools and a strong, family-based commitment to improving them. She also had an impatience with tired excuses for the status quo; in an interview with *The Neighborhood Works* in December 1987, she expressed frustration with black middle class administrators that she saw stonewalling reform efforts: "I do not blame them for the problems with education instituted while we were still being a maid in Miss Ann's house. But we do blame them for perpetuating the problem. As black administrators in this city at this time, how can they so soon forget where they came from? We expect more of them, because we suffered to allow them to be where they are."

Each of the groups now coming together brought something critical to the reform movement. The business community brought its resources and its credibility. UNO brought its capacity to turn out people for public campaigns. The People's Coalition brought significant community leaders and a broad network of organizations. The CURE coalition brought its basic plan.

PCER leaders, along with representatives of Designs and other CURE members (including Near North Development Corporation), met weekly throughout fall and winter 1987-88, to argue through the bill and make it reflect the new, and broader, coalition. Ben Kendrick recalls those meetings as "a great experience. We went through it point-by-point and tore everything apart. We viewed PURE and CURE as two white groups, pushing a white community agenda that seemed to coincide with our concerns. The question for us was, can we as African-Americans support this and not view it as a sellout?" Karanja, in particular, worked for language mandating a "multicultural curriculum." He argued that minority children often fail in school because they "see almost all they learn is European-developed; there's nothing from African or Hispanic development—and therefore there's no sense of positiveness about themselves. That's the reason so many drop out: they can't find a place for themselves, they don't see anything that corroborates them in the curriculum—or in the world."

The basic text of the revised CURE plan went to the Legislative Reference Bureau in Springfield in February 1988. Thus, at the same time that the formal Summit was attempting to fashion a citywide, consensus-based school reform plan, the CURE coalition had drafted its own plan, translated it into legislative language, and spent several months building legislative support for it. CURE representatives also participated in the Summit process. McFerren emerged as one of the strongest voices on the Parent/Community Council (where she too pushed the "multicultural curriculum" agenda). Don Moore was an active participant on the expanded Summit, but remained skeptical of it. "We saw the Summit as potentially dangerous to what we wanted," he says. "There was a strong sentiment to compromise, to make things too watered down. And there was also the idea that it was dangerous to go to Springfield, that we should keep things within the family [i.e., Chicago]. But we thought all along that [state] legislation was essential for major restructuring."

As the Summit process wore on into March, many participants became skeptical that it would be possible to produce anything of substance out of it. Among the most skeptical was Patrick Keleher, who was then working for Chicago United. Like Moore, Keleher had been convinced for some time that the schools needed radical restructuring. He believed that the real hope for bringing it about lay in business groups allying themselves with parent and community groups to create "a new political counterweight" to break the power of the board and the unions. He saw that alliance begin to build in the Summit, but was uneasy about the direction it was taking. "Everything was becoming Gerberized. There was no City Hall leadership. I knew we had to have something to take to Springfield. So we began to formalize our relationship [i.e., between business leaders and community groups]. We took the initiative, to reach out to the community leaders." (Don Moore tells the story a little differently: "The Haymarket people proposed that we ask the business community to support our legislation and work with us: we'll go to your meetings, you come to ours.")

Whoever first reached out to whom, by March of 1988 a group of reformers had begun meeting regularly, under the auspices of Chicago United and with Peter Martinez as convenor. This became the germ of the ABCs coalition (Alliance for Better Chicago Schools). It was a constantly shifting and expanding group: "There were no invitations, no RSVPs," recalls Keleher. "Anybody could have come to that party." With the Summit process foundering, the ABCs coalition became the focal point of school reform from that point onwards.

The participation of Martinez signalled another critical piece that had been added to the puzzle: UNO. Martinez was both a consultant to UNO and a deacon in Chicago United, on the education committee; he was a practical, experienced practitioner at building coalitions for political action. He did not, however, represent UNO directly; Danny Solis, UNO's executive director and a member of the Education Summit, played that role.

The decision to join the school reform coalition was a critical one organizationally for UNO. Among community-based organizations, UNO is known for its hard-bitten power analysis of issues, allies, and enemies. It is notorious for being reluctant to join coalitions, especially with partners whose ability to deliver is unknown, and for being unwilling to take part in campaigns whose agenda it does not control. In signing onto the school reform coalition at this point, UNO by its own standards took a major risk. Behind the decision lay UNO's frustration with its own earlier school efforts, respect for the credibility of the school reform groups (especially Designs and the Panel, whose 1987 legislation UNO had backed) and a belief, according to Solis, that school reform presented an "opportunity for empowerment" that could extend beyond the schools.

Point	Campaign Platform	House Plan	Senate Plan
1.	Parents, teachers, principals, community representative and students sharing in local decision making, with appropriate training.	C	B
2.	The Chicago School Board and administration accountable to the local community.	C—	C
3.	The principal in charge of all staff at his/her school.	C+	D
4.	Allocation of resources to give every student access to equal educational opportunities.	C	B
5.	Improved instructional environment: smaller class size, eliminate overcrowding in schools.	D	F
6.	A streamlined central administration: shift staffing priorities to the local schools.	D	C—
7.	Strictly enforced standards and improved professional training for teachers, administrators and staff.	D+	D—
8.	Availability of a quality core curriculum for all students, with enrichment to meet local needs.	D	C+
9.	Increased funding for implementation of meaningful reform	F	F

The Campaign for School Reform evaluated legislative efforts with respect to its stated goals.

Each of the groups now coming together brought something critical to the reform movement. The business community brought its considerable resources, its credibility, its clout. UNO brought its capacity, unrivalled among community-based groups, to turn out huge numbers of people for public events and campaigns. The People's Coalition brought significant community leaders and a broad network of organizations. The CURE coalition brought its basic plan, now refined through weeks of meetings with the People's Coalition and the Haymarket group and drafted into legislative language ready for Springfield. That plan was now modified further to reflect the new coalition partners.

The business leaders were prepared to buy onto the CURE plan as the most solid and comprehensive restructuring of the schools. But still missing, they argued, was accountability: who would monitor implementation of reform, and—in the event a school council failed in the basic task of running the school—who would take over? The business solution was the one Peter Wilmott had argued for in the Summit: an oversight authority. CURE accepted the oversight plan, and the business leaders signed onto the CURE plan.

UNO brought another key issue: equity. Changing governance alone was not enough to improve the schools, argued Solis. Most neighborhood schools were understaffed and underfunded to do a decent job for children. UNO's own reform plan (drafted by Sabin principal Lourdes Monteagudo and dubbed "The Neighborhood Schoolhouse That Works") analyzed what characteristics were needed for effective schools and what resources were necessary to support them. Such resources should be available, not just to a handful of magnet schools, but to all schools. UNO insisted that a key principle of reform be that school resources be spent equitably, and that all children benefit fairly from resources spent on schools. Costed out by the Chicago Panel, the UNO proposals came to $584.6 million. However, in practice, UNO did not play up the demand for more resources but concentrated on insisting that resources be fairly distributed. Similarly, UNO's proposals were careful not to attack magnet schools but to insist that the kind of resources that went into magnets should be available to neighborhood schools as well.

The resource and equity issues were further refined by critical contributions made by the Chicago Panel. Panel research had demonstrated that the Board of Education was taking monies specifically targeted to schools with large numbers of poor children (Chapter I money) and using it for other purposes. Stopping such abuses would target more money toward schools in poor communities (where, by law, it already belonged). This position, on an issue that was extremely important to black groups such as the Urban League and black legislators, was also backed by PURE, the North Side alliance which included many parents and teachers from magnet schools.

The Panel also focused attention on the question of cutting the central bureaucracy. Years of experience monitoring school budgets had convinced the Panel of the creativity with which administrators could manage to hold onto and expand staffs even while ostensibly "cutting" spending. Diana Lauber, who represented the Panel at ABC meetings, argued for language to make specific the level of cuts that would be necessary and for putting a cap on future expansion of the central administration; such provisions were incorporated into the Panel's own bill that was being prepared for Springfield.

The Panel was originally part of the ABCs coalition, but later dropped out. The Panel is constituted as a coalition and is governed by consensus of its members; some members were supportive of Panel involvement, but others (notably the Urban League, Chicago Region PTA, and League of Women Voters) blocked the Panel from formally signing on to the ABCs. The Panel had its own bill (which called for school councils, composed of half parents and half staff, with control over principal selection, budget, and curriculum, as well as cutting the bureaucracy and shifting Chapter I funds) prepared for Springfield.

Other significant reform groups also declined to join the ABCs coalition. Though it had representatives at ABCs meetings, the Parent/Community Council refused to sign on to the coalition. In part this reflected real disagreement on issues—James Deanes was particularly adamant on the question of the oversight authority, and he questioned whether the attacks on the school bureaucracy were "overplayed." But it was also attributable to growing suspicion of the style and motives of some of the lead groups. Instead, the PCC had its own bill, based on its January

ABCs school reform principles

■ ***Local school decision-making:*** Grant authority to the local school governing body to determine programs, budget, and contract with the principal.

■ ***Authority to principals:*** Grant the principal the authority to hire, supervise, and fire all school staff.

■ ***Teacher accountability:*** Remove and train non-performing teachers.

■ ***Equity of resources:*** Allocate more resources to low-income/low-achieving schools.

■ ***Cut central administration:*** Reduce the power and size of the central administration and place a cap on its future spending.

■ ***Oversight commission with powers:*** Establish an oversight body with powers to insure reforms are carried out.

proposal to the Summit, prepared to take to Springfield.

Others who stayed away from ABCs were the parent groups PURE, Believe in the Public Schools, and others. They were suspicious of the calls for increased "community representation," which they believed would (as PURE put it) "make it possible for extremist groups and ward bosses to take over ... schools" and "pit parents against professional community organizers." PURE and the others walked out of the ABCs over the issue of the constitution of the school councils: PURE wanted a clear parent majority, along with more authority for teachers; where the ABCs plan called for equal parent and community representation. Believe in the Public Schools was another group that had its own bill in Springfield.

PURE and the other parent groups had meanwhile joined another loose school reform coalition, the Campaign for School Reform. This was organized by the Citizens Schools Committee, a long-established school advocacy group that had taken on new energy with the appointment of Ted Oppenheimer as executive director. CSC made an effort to build the broadest possible coalition, including everyone from the Chicago Teachers Union and the PTA to UNO and the Chicago Panel, lined up behind a set of reform principles. Unlike the ABCs coalition, however, CSC never translated its principles into legislation.

By the end of May, the ABCs group had negotiated six principles for school reform. With Solis taking the lead, the coalition organized a massive rally at the downtown Bismarck Hotel on June 6 to kick off the ABCs legislative campaign. Hundreds of sign-waving, slogan-chanting parents and students (and some teachers) showed up. On the podium, in all their wild variety, were representatives of the groups that made up the ABCs coalition at this point: business leaders, professional education and child advocates, parent and community leaders. Everyone sported bright yellow-and-red buttons with the slogan: "Don't come home without it."

The flyer passed out at the rally spelled out what the ABCs group had decided was the essence of Chicago school reform; any bill would have to be evaluated against these principles *(see box at left)*.

The people present on June 6 vowed to take their demands to Springfield. There was, as yet, no single consensus bill, but there was growing agreement on the basic shape of reform, and a tremendous determination to make it happen.

CHAPTER 4: Through the Legislature

While different groups in Chicago were getting set to come down to Springfield with their reform proposals, the Legislature was bracing for them. Legislators had been struggling with Chicago school problems for years, to little avail. They saw themselves as being asked continually to pour more and more money into Chicago's schools, while the schools got worse and worse. For many downstate legislators, the problem was typical Chicago "big city" trouble; with unconscious (or thinly veiled) racism, they referred to the city's schools as "a black hole" absorbing everything that came near it and putting out nothing in return. But city legislators themselves were also angered at the failure of the school board to implement the 1985 reforms, and at the system's bloated bureaucracy and its seemingly endless capacity to absorb resources. When the 1987 strike predictably ended with demands for more money out of Springfield, the legislators appropriated an extra $5.2 million, but warned that there would be no new monies without significant reforms.

Legislators had been struggling with Chicago school problems for years, to little avail. They saw themselves as being asked continually to pour more and more money into Chicago's schools, while the schools got worse and worse.

There were several currents in the Legislature in the spring of 1988 that affected school reform legislation.

First, the state government was caught up in the struggle between Governor James Thompson and House Speaker Michael Madigan over a state income tax increase. Thompson, a lame-duck Republican, wanted a tax hike, but in previous attempts had been unable to deliver Republican votes; Madigan, a Democrat, had watched Democratic supporters get clobbered by Republicans running against higher taxes, and he wasn't going to get trapped again. Despite a heavy blitz by the Governor, the Speaker's refusal to support the tax increase killed its chances. That meant that any school reform proposal would have to be "revenue neutral": i.e., not cost more money. (To some reform critics, that explains why the legislation focused on the "governance" aspects of the schools —rather than new programs to revise the curriculum, introduce better teaching materials, lower class size, or improve teacher performance—all of which would have cost money.)

Second, a number of proposals had been floating in recent years for restructuring Chicago's schools. One proposal, defeated in earlier versions but still having some support, was for an elected school board, a tricky proposition in a city with strong racial politics. Other proposals focused on decentralizing the system into smaller districts, on the New York model. This proposal was sponsored by Republican Sen. (now Lieutenant Governor) Robert Kustra, of suburban Park Ridge; it attracted support for Republicans, suburbanites, and downstaters who were tired of dealing with the massive Chicago district. But the real driving force behind the plan had to do with something altogether independent of school reform: union politics. The Illinois Education Association (affiliated with the National Education Association) saw district decentralization as a strategy to enable it to break the power of the Chicago Teachers Union (an affiliate of the rival American Federation of Teachers). With Chicago divided into twenty districts, the IEA could organize in individual districts to win the right to represent teachers away from the CTU, rather than undertaking the formidable task of organizing all over Chicago. The IEA has considerable clout with many downstate legislators and pushed its plan vigorously.

A third factor affecting the school reform issue was the fact that there were relatively few high-profile issues in Springfield at the same time. Most of the drama centered around the tax increase question, and that was a struggle not in the Legislature but between the Speaker and the Governor. The other proposal in Springfield that June was the proposed new publicly funded stadium for the Chicago White Sox, which was voted through at the very last moment. Other than that, there was little else going on in the Capitol—and plenty of time for interested legislators to take the time to craft a thoroughgoing restructuring of the city's schools.

Finally, 1988 was a statewide election year, and spring 1989 would bring an election in Chicago for the Mayor's office. Election considerations were obviously paramount in the struggle over new taxes, but they were also important in school reform. For speaker Madigan, it was particularly critical to have the Black Caucus line up behind any reform legislation.

The Reformers Come to Springfield

As the Chicago reformers prepared to journey to Springfield, the prospects for reform were uncertain. Despite all the months of trying to create a consensus bill, formally in the Summit process, then in the ABCs coalition, there was no one bill that

pulled together all the different groups. The ABCs group had assembled the broadest coalition. But several important reform groups had pulled out, notably the PCC, PURE, and the Chicago Panel.

With reformers unable to get together on a single reform bill, they risked having the legislators get together to write a bill that suited them—one that reformers might not like at all. Some observers, however, believed that, once the Chicagoans got down to Springfield and discovered the plans that downstate legislators had for Chicago's schools, they would find a way to pull together.

The reformers' differing ideas surfaced in Springfield as several different pieces of legislation. The CURE bill was introduced in the legislature in April 1988; sponsors included Reps. Carol Moseley Braun and Al Ronan, and Senators Miguel del Valle, William Marovitz, both Chicago Democrats, and Kustra, a Republican. Other bills came from the Chicago Panel, sponsored by Rep. Ellis Levin and Sen. Richard Newhouse; the Concerned Parents Network, sponsored by Sen. Dawn Clark Netsch; and the Parent/Community Council, sponsored by Rep. Anthony Young. In addition, Kustra's bill, calling for decentralization to the district level, had strong support among Republicans and some Democrats in the Senate.

The school reform bill was drafted in a series of extraordinary public sessions in Speaker Madigan's office, led by Sen. Arthur Berman, Rep. Anthony Young, Rep. John Cullerton (chair), and Rep. Ellis Levin (in foreground, from left). The sessions were attended by representatives of all the "interested parties." (Chicago Tribune photo)

Sen. Arthur Berman convened the Senate Education Committee to draft a version that would take the best from all the plans into one consensus bill. This bill passed the upper house on June 2 and was sent over to the House; it became the basic legislative vehicle for school reform.

In the House, meanwhile, a Democratic Task Force on Education, comprising Reps. Joe Berrios, Ellis Levin, and Carol Moseley Braun, had struggled to produce its own version of a reform bill but without success. (Gov. Thompson also had his own Joint Task Force on Education.) At this point, House Speaker Michael Madigan stepped in.

The Speaker Takes Control

Madigan convened an extraordinary meeting, in his office, of both legislators and "interested parties"—i.e., the board, the unions, and various reform groups. At the meeting he made it clear that he was determined to have a school reform bill that would work, that he wanted it to be drafted with input from the "interested parties," and that people would have to work together to hammer out a compromise.

Madigan's intervention also set the political terms on which the legislation would move. It had to be revenue neutral (because Madigan would not allow a tax increase). It had to be acceptable to the Black Caucus, a significant element in Madigan's support in the Legislature (a broader political reality was at stake here as well: because more than 80 percent of Chicago schoolchildren are black and Hispanic, as are many school employees, it was felt that no reform effort could succeed unless black and Hispanic legislators voted for it). The bill also had to be acceptable to the CTU and other school unions. Beyond that, according to Rep. (now Senator) John Cullerton, they had "free rein" to draft "complete structural change" for the schools.

Speaker Madigan is an extremely powerful man in Illinois politics, and his intervention at this point was critical. It signalled that a significant bill would come out of the legislature to reform Chicago's schools. Madigan himself has never been identified as a particular education activist; of all Chicago legislators, he has relatively few public school children in his district. His decision to move on school reform was not based on personal commitment but on political reality. It was clear that the legislature was going to have to do something about the schools: there was strong sentiment among legislators and mounting public and media pressure back home. The Kustra decentralization bill, which had earlier passed the Senate, was anathema to the unions and opposed by reform groups as well. The struggles in previous years over school funding had made it clear that no new school money would be forthcoming unless the schools were changed and their bureaucracy curbed. It seemed that the time had come to deal with the schools. By taking leadership, Madigan could fashion a bill that met his terms, get it passed, and take credit for a major piece of legislation at a time when editorial writers were castigating him as a naysayer on the tax question.

Still, it was extraordinary that Madigan gave the group "free rein" to reshape the school system top-to-bottom, and put the prestige of his office (and one of his smartest, most trusted lieutenants, John Cullerton) behind the effort. Why did he do it?

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Cullerton: "We sensed the politics of it. Frustration with the bureaucracy. Everybody but the entrenched educators and unions were fed up."

Popular Pressure

Cullerton, at Madigan's request, convened a committee consisting of himself, Reps. Tony Young and Ellis Levin, and Sen. Berman to "work out the details."

Usually, the "details" of legislation at this point are thrashed through behind closed doors in small groups of legislators, their staffs, and lobbyists representing well-funded interest groups; only the final bill is made public for citizen comment. Usually, too, when concerned citizens want to influence legislation, they write letters, go to the State Capitol, talk to legislators, give testimony at committee hearings, and then get back on their buses and go home.

When banker Ken West addressed a group of parents in Springfield, "you'd think I'd given the Gettysburg Address. The reception in that room was just unbelievable."

The process that produced the Chicago school reform bill was not business-as-usual on either score.

For one thing, it featured continual assault waves of reformers, parents and community members, business leaders, and other "interested parties" descending on Springfield. They didn't just come on one designated day; they came day after day, week after week throughout June, forming what one experienced legislative observer calls "a consistent vigil" for school reform. UNO organized "five to ten" busloads of people; the People's Coalition sent six busloads. Chicago United paid for many of these buses (Chicago United spent $30,000 on travel expenses related to school reform in 1988). The Campaign for School Reform, under the auspices of the Citizens Schools Committee, organized car pools and four busloads of people. The PTA estimates it sent "300 to 400" people (though their message was primarily the need to spend more money for the schools).

Once they arrived in Springfield, the parents and community members fanned out through the Capitol, talking to legislators, holding rallies, and—for those who were part of the ABCs group—chanting the slogan "Don't Come Home Without It." The ABCs members wore large yellow buttons with that slogan; the yellow buttons seemed to be everywhere in Springfield in June 1988. UNO and the CURE coalition staged a mock "graduation ceremony" to remind legislators of children who had been failed by the school; the Campaign for School Reform issued a "report card" on the various legislative proposals.

Sen. Kustra recalls the presence of so many parents and community members as making a particular impression on Republican and downstate legislators: "They were people from all walks of life, racial groups, parts of the city. Our members, after all, do not represent districts with lots of African-Americans. We got a chance to listen to them tell us how much they care about their children. I know that downstate legislators were impressed with the extent they [parents] were willing to go to get control of their schools. I don't think members of our [Senate Republican] caucus would have been impressed with representatives from large, mainline organizations: we'd have asked, aren't you paid to be here? It was the mothers of children in Chicago who most impressed us."

At the same time, business leaders organized by Chicago United came down by corporate jet and met with every legislator who would see them, pushing the ABCs bill. David Paulus of First National Bank recalls that business leaders came to Springfield as "informed advocates: They [business leaders] had suffered through hundreds of hours of meetings with parents, community groups—they really knew what people were looking for; so when we went into the meetings with legislators, we knew more than they did.... The lesson is, you have to have business leaders who can really argue with a passion—not just sit there and say, 'we're for better education.' "

Ken West, of Harris Bank, one of the most passionate of the "informed advocates," recalls a day in Springfield that typified the extraordinary alliance behind school reform: "We [corporate leaders] had come down on jets. We ran into a bunch of parents who came down on buses they couldn't afford. Coretta [McFerren] and Danny [Solis] were running the meeting. They asked me to say a few words. I thought to myself, what can I say that will make these people think I'm even a human being? Then they introduced me. You'd think you were at a high school pep rally, they were clapping and cheering. And when I spoke, well, you'd think I'd given the Gettysburg Address. The reception in that room was just unbelievable. I went over to hug Coretta. We both cried."

While the busloads and jets full of people were coming and going, a significant number of people were staying in town to see the legislation through. Any organization with paid staff that could afford to sent representatives. Designs for Change, the Chicago Panel, Chicago United, Voices for Illinois Children, Kenwood-Oakland Community Organization, UNO, and the Urban League all had staff people on hand, and the Haymarket Group was there as well working on behalf of the ABCs effort. Middle-class parents who could arrange work schedules to be present stayed for several days. (On the other hand, people such as James Deanes of the PCC and Judy Budde of the PTA recall that it was difficult for them to commit that kind of time to Springfield. Some groups later charged that they had been outlasted by large, better funded, better staffed groups—notably Designs for Change.)

The same sense of urgency that was building in Springfield was also building up back home in Chicago, as groups urged their members to contact legislators to press for reform. PURE, CURE, the Campaign for School Reform, David Paulus at First National, all sent out mailings in June urging people to contact legislators. Anne Hallett of the Wieboldt Foundation circulated a letter which was signed by representatives of seventeen local foundations, urging action on the basic principles of the reform groups; this was an extraordinary statement coming from foundations, which usually avoid even the appearance of direct lobbying. The *Chicago Tribune* ran a devastating series describing conditions at the Goudy School in a poor neighborhood on the

city's North Side. *Tribune* and *Sun-Times* editorials were urging action and warning against plots, by the CTU or others, to delay reform. (On the other hand, Vernon Jarrett, in the *Sun-Times*, reflected growing anxiety in parts of the African-American community in warning that the reforms being proposed would be a dangerous experiment in which black children would be the "guinea pigs.")

One place that the urgency was not apparent was among the city's long-established black community and civil rights groups, such as PUSH, the Midwest Community Council, and The Woodlawn Organization. Kenwood-Oakland Community Organization had organized some parents to go to Springfield. PUSH reportedly sent a representative at the very end of the month expressing reservations about the legislation, and Leon Finney from TWO showed up at the end as well. The Urban League was involved off-and-on, but it was uneasy about the direction reform was taking. There were significant black leaders in Springfield working on the reform legislation (notably James Deanes, Coretta McFerren, Sokoni Karanja, and Al Raby—as well as Jackie Vaughn and Erwin France, representing the CTU and Mayor Sawyer). But few of the mainline groups spent much time in Springfield on school reform that month, and none played a central role in drafting the legislation—despite urging by Deanes and Karanja, among others, to get involved.

The Meetings in Madigan's Office

While parents and business leaders were roaming the State Capitol, holding rallies and talking to any legislators who would listen, Cullerton and his ad hoc committee consisting of Rep. Young and Sen. Berman (with occasional participation by other legislators) were following Madigan's orders to "work out the details" and to do so with participation from all the "interested parties." Cullerton chaired a series of meetings in Madigan's office that he recalls as "sixty hours, the last two weeks of the session, twelve hours a day."

Those sessions were, by the account of most legislators, extraordinary. A major piece of legislation was being drafted, in public session, with debate and compromise between representatives of most of those who would be affected: parents, union leaders, principals, reform groups, business leaders, and community organizations. As Sen. del Valle later remarked, it is common for paid lobbyists representing various interests to help draft legislation, but the level of direct grassroots participation in drafting the school reform legislation was extraordinary. And, despite later charges that some groups were "locked out" of the process, that doesn't appear to have happened, at least at the meetings in Madigan's office; Rep. Young commented that "anyone who came down would be allowed to participate; no group that I know of was excluded—and I was in the room most of the time."

While there was consensus among most participants over the basic outline of reform—taking power away from the central bureaucracy and bringing it to the local school level—it was hammering out the details that took all the time. Among the points at dispute, both in the sessions in Madigan's office and later on the floor of the legislature, were the following:

1. *The role and tenure of the principal.* Educational research identifies the leadership of the principal as a key factor in the success of the school. The old system had undermined the principal's potential for bringing about change in two ways: first, by restricting the principal's control over school staff through a variety of union regulations—so that principals could not choose teachers, for example, or give orders to cafeteria personnel or school engineers (principals did not even have keys to the school building—those were held by engineers); and second, by giving principals lifetime tenure—so that principals whose schools were clearly failing could not be removed except for cause.

Reformers wanted change on both counts. They succeeded on the second, stripping principals of tenure and establishing instead three-year performance contracts (later upped to four years in the veto session). This change was opposed by the Principals Association, represented by Bruce Berndt, to no avail. (Later the principals brought a lawsuit charging that their property rights in tenure had been taken away without due process of law; they lost.)

The issue of control over school staffs was compromised under pressure from school unions. The principals got the right to choose new teachers without regard to seniority, and procedures for remediating or getting rid of nonperforming teachers were streamlined. Principals also got the right to issue orders to other school staff (engineers and food service), and they were explicitly given the keys of the school building. However, if nonteaching staff disagreed with the orders, they could take the the matter to the district level for resolution. This compromise was negotiated by the Principals Association and representatives of the other unions (to the surprise of many reformers, who were prepared to fight for stronger principal authority and were dismayed when Berndt backed off). It later came under fire (from Berndt himself, among others) as a retreat from the basic premise that if the principal was to be held accountable for overall school performance, he/she needs to be in charge of all school personnel.

2. *Composition of the local school councils.* Making sure that parents had a dominant voice in the councils was a critical point for the Parent/Community Council and parent groups such as PURE; the CURE bill, on the other hand, would have given community members a strong representation and made possible a majority of teachers, principal, and community members outvoting parents. The parent groups won, with backing from legislators such as Sen. Berman who felt that parents had the greatest interest in the schools and should have the greatest representation; the bill called for councils comprising six parents, two teachers, two community representatives, and the principal. (The greater weight given to parents was also challenged in the principals' lawsuit; the fact that only parents could vote for the parent representatives—and thus their votes counted more—

UNO, under executive director Danny Solis, brought people and pressure to bear on legislators in Springfield.

was the basis on which the Illinois Supreme Court, in November 1990, threw out the entire act as an unconstitutional violation of one person, one vote.)

3. *Selection of the school board.* The Mayor of Chicago has traditionally appointed the school board. Some reform proposals floated in previous years—and the Kustra bill in 1988—had called for elected school boards; other proposals had devised various schemes for having the board elected from school and district councils. The final bill allowed those councils to elect a school board nominating committee, but left the appointment power in the hands of the mayor. To get reform efforts started even before the councils could be elected, a provision (originated by Mayor Sawyer's representative, Erwin France) was inserted into the bill directing the mayor to appoint an interim school board. According to Rep. Young, the timing of this appointment became an issue: Young pushed for the interim board to be appointed before the mayoral elections scheduled for spring 1989, but lost. In those elections, control of city government shifted from Sawyer (who is black) to Richard M. Daley (who is white)—and Daley seized the opportunity, as one of his first acts as Mayor, to appoint a "reform" board of education and associate himself with the school reform effort.

Making sure that parents had a dominant voice in the councils was a critical point for the Parent/ Community Council and several parent groups.

4. *Oversight authority.* The idea for an oversight authority to make sure reform was being implemented came from the business community, and they were adamant about having an independent authority with strong powers incorporated into the legislation. On the other hand, people such as James Deanes saw the oversight proposal as an attack, with racist overtones, on the right of Chicagoans to control their own schools, and fought strongly against it. Another issue with political implications was the composition of the board, and whether the Mayor or the Governor would appoint the majority; Democrats favored the former, Republicans favored the latter. The business community prevailed in getting an oversight authority with strong powers—including veto power over contracts—incorporated into the legislation (the provision itself was written by George Munoz, representing Chicago United). The Democratic-controlled committee gave the Mayor the majority appointment power—a decision that was one of the key elements that turned Republicans away from supporting the final bill.

5. *Administrative "cap."* The reformers' goal of limiting the size, authority, and resources of the central administration merged nicely with Madigan's fiat that reform had to be revenue neutral: money required to implement the new bill (for example, run elections, train councils, etc.) would have to come from somewhere, and the bureaucracy, which legislators and reformers alike felt had grown far out of proportion and had successfully stifled all previous attempts at reform, was the perfect target. But how specific did legislators need to be in mandating cuts? One proposal, offered on the Senate floor by Sen. Marowitz, proposing reallocation of 1,000 jobs, was dismissed as impractical by Sen. Berman. The formula for the "cap" incorporated into the bill was devised by State Rep. Ellis Levin and Diana Lauber, of the Chicago Panel, which had for years followed in excruciating detail the board's stratagems for protecting bureaucratic jobs at the expense of classroom positions. Levin proposed setting a "cap" on the central bureaucracy, allocating dollars equal to the average number of dollars per pupil spent by other school districts in the state. (In the veto session, this was revised to take into account differences in the cost of living between different school districts.)

6. *Equity & Title I.* Equity was a key concern of black and Hispanic reformers, who argued that the magnet schools, ostensibly established to promote desegregation, in fact created a two-tiered system that left most minority children attending inferior, poorly funded neighborhood schools. Another concern—raised especially by black legislators and backed up by research by the Chicago Panel, which had long spotlighted this issue—was that State Chapter I money to help educate disadvantaged children was not being appropriately targeted to reach those children. Magnet school parents were strongly represented among the reformers, and there was no serious attempt to destroy those schools. But in turn magnet school parents—especially those in PURE—supported the reallocation of Chapter I money to truly disadvantaged children. The final bill passed after the veto session contained a "hold harmless" clause which phased in the reallocation of that money so that no school would actually lose resources as a result.

7. *Choice.* The original CURE proposals called for "increasing choice within the public school system," and Chicago United called for "choice of school for parents and students, intra-district and inter-district." Some business leaders wanted to go further and introduce vouchers that would apply to private systems as well. But many reform groups—James Deanes was perhaps the most vehement—saw choice (and especially vouchers) as an attack on the whole public education system that would benefit wealthier families at the expense of the poor. The final bill passed after the veto session backed away from mandating choice and instead ordered the school board to study the issue and come up with a plan for choice within the public system, to be phased in during the 1991-92 school year.

The reformers' goal of limiting the size, authority, and resources of the central administration merged nicely with Madigan's fiat that reform had to be revenue neutral.

8. *Role and job security of teachers.* Like the principals, teachers stood both to gain and lose through reform; but the teachers were much more effectively represented than the principals in the legislative process, and they understood the give-and-take of bargaining. Through their representation on the school councils—and especially the professional personnel advisory committees, or PPACs (which were put in almost as an afterthought)—the teachers gained for the first time a voice in running the school (and a vote on the contract of their boss, the principal—which some observers later criticized as a conflict of interest). On

the other hand, teachers agreed to a streamlined "remediation" process to get nonperforming teachers out of the classroom more quickly. In a key concession, principals were given the right to choose new staff without regard for seniority. But the CTU fought to protect teachers who might lose jobs because of falling enrollment (called "supernumeraries")—a demand that almost derailed the reform bill and drew an amendatory veto from the governor. In the final legislation, such teachers could no longer be guaranteed the right to "bump" other teachers in school jobs, but they were guaranteed the right to a job within the system, either in a school or in the central office. (Contrast this guarantee with the plight of principals, who were given no job guarantees if they were denied new contracts.)

Don Moore, executive director of Designs for Change, who played a critical role in pushing the legislation to completion.

9. *Training of council and board members.* One frequent criticism of the move to decentralize authority was that, however well-intentioned, parents and community members had little knowledge of budgeting, curriculum, teaching methods, and other skills involved in running a school. Sen. Berman and others believed that to make reform work, it was essential that new council members be trained to exercise their new authority; and so language was put into the bill authorizing council members the right to contract for training. The problem was that several of the leading reform advocates (notably Designs for Change and the Chicago Panel) also offered parent training, and could be expected to offer their services to the new councils—which they were helping to create. That immediately opened the reform bill to the attack that, like school debates in the past, it was nothing more than a fight over jobs and contracts. The fact that the training offered by the two groups is free (supported by foundation funding) did not deflect the criticism.

10. *"Educational" reforms.* Many of the people who came to Springfield were determined to push for features such as early childhood education and smaller class size—measures they felt would have an immediate impact on the classroom, which the structural reforms being written into the legislation would not. This was, for example, the position of the Urban League and the PTA. However, given Madigan's opposition to the tax increase, none of these features made it into the legislation. Thus the bill was opened to the criticism that it was really about power, not about education. However, given the past experience of the legislature in attempting to mandate reforms for Chicago's schools, it was clear that, tax increase or not, no new programs would be funded until there was a structural overhaul of the schools.

As these and other "details" were being worked out under Cullerton's leadership, Mary Dempsey of the Haymarket Group and Diana Lauber of the Panel played especially important roles in drafting and redrafting critical portions of the bill and taking them back to the people in Madigan's office for approval. Several participants, both legislators and activists, commented on the importance of the reformers' capacity to process information, make changes in a timely manner, keep legislators and others informed, and keep the process moving. Don Moore of Designs also played a critical role; one observer commented that "he was invaluable: he'd been there before, he knew which changes would weaken the bill and which ones we could live with." Another called him "the great untiring convincer" in pushing the process to completion, but added: "If it weren't for the rest of us, the bill would never have had the quality it finally did have."

Meanwhile, June 30 (the last day of the legislative session) was fast approaching and the school reform bill still wasn't complete; as late as June 27, Chicago United was withholding support demanding strengthening of the oversight authority, the principals' authority, and other features. Republicans, meanwhile, were complaining that what Kustra called "these mysterious meetings in Madigan's office" were shutting them out of the process, and publicly vowing to block whatever Democrat-sponsored bill came out of Madigan's office. Politically, their best chance to do that was in the Senate; the House had a solid Democratic majority, but the Senate was nearly evenly split (31 Democrats to 28 Republicans). With one Democrat, Sen. Alexander, too ill to be in Springfield, the bill would need all 30 Democratic votes to pass, and if the GOP held solid in its opposition, they would need only one Democratic defector to defeat the bill and force the Democratic leadership to reconstruct it along lines more to their liking.

Getting through the Legislature

On the last night of the session, it fell to Sen. Arthur Berman to introduce the carefully crafted plan to the Senate. The bill, said Berman, reflected "the consensus opinion of dozens of organizations and thousands and thousands of citizens of Chicago." He then outlined the bill's major provisions *(see Appendix)*, making a particular point of stressing that it was revenue neutral: "Chicago reform with Chicago money."

Senate Republicans, led by Kustra, immediately attacked the bill for failing to come to grips with "the concentration of bureaucratic and union power that has rendered the Chicago school system helpless in educating its children." Republicans listed four objections, which were to be bandied back and forth in a fierce political struggle over the next several days:

1. The oversight authority should be controlled by the (Republican) Governor, not the (Democratic) Mayor of Chicago.

2. The oversight authority should have the authority to impound funds if the Chicago Board of Education was not complying with the reform.

3. The principal should have full authority over all staff in the school, without regard to seniority or competing chains of command. In particular, job guarantees for "supernumeraries" were attacked.

4. Parents should have some measure of choice of where to send their children.

The first two on the GOP list were opposed by the Black Caucus (and other Chicago legislators) as giving control of the city's schools over to the Republican (and white) Governor. The third was fiercely opposed by the unions; and the fourth was a

matter of some controversy in the reform coalition, some of whom favored it and some who opposed it. Thus the GOP objections attacked the political consensus Speaker Madigan had identified as being key to passage of school reform: that the bill had to reflect the consensus of the reformers, and that it had to be acceptable to the Black Caucus and the unions. With those groups lined up behind the Democratic-sponsored bill, the Democrats thought they had the 30 votes needed for passage, and that they could move ahead without accommodating Republican demands.

But their plans went awry at the last moment. A Downstate Democrat, Sen. Sam Vadalabene, suddenly took sick and had to leave the Senate floor. When the bill was called, only 29 Democrats were on hand to vote for it. No Republicans voted for it—despite the fact that Chicago United and the business leaders, who supposedly had the most clout with GOP legislators, were lined up behind it. The bill failed. The reformers, and their legislative supporters, watched in dismay as the legislature turned to the final item on its agenda, the controversial proposal to build a new publicly funded stadium for the Chicago White Sox. If the votes weren't there for school reform, the governor and legislative leaders, in a breathtaking display of political arm-twisting, made sure there were enough votes for the White Sox; and despite all the no-taxes rhetoric, voted to spend $150 million for the new stadium. (Sen. del Valle, who had worked tirelessly for school reform, refused to join his fellow Democrats in voting for the stadium out of disgust at the failure of the reform bill.)

With the last day of the legislative session passed, any bill would now require a three-fifths majority—and thus the support of Republicans—to pass and become effective immediately; bills passed with only a simple majority would have to wait a full year before becoming effective. The next two days saw furious bargaining among the reform groups, the unions, and political leaders on both sides of the legislature to craft a bill that could attract the "supermajority." At issue were the same pieces Kustra had objected to: parental choice, the oversight authority, and strengthening the role of the principals. At one point, legislative leaders reached a deal to incorporate most of the Republican demands. But the Black Caucus remained adamantly opposed to what they viewed as giving up local control to the oversight authority, and the CTU put labor's clout on the line in protection of job security for the "supernumeraries," teachers who would lose jobs because of declining enrollments. Their opposition was enough to break the deal: Madigan remained true to the conditions he had set out at the beginning, that he would not pass a bill without support from the Black Caucus and the unions.

Thus, on July 3, the original Democratic plan was back on the floor of both houses. Republicans attacked it furiously as a betrayal of the city's children in deference to union power. The House Minority Leader, Lee Daniels, said "In the 14 years I've been here I've never been more ashamed of your actions than I am today because greatness was in your hands and you lost it." Some Democrats also criticized the bill; Sen. Ted Lechowicz called the provision for training of school councils just another grab for jobs and contracts, and others wondered again why there were no provisions for early childhood, reduced class size, and other "educational" provisions. But in the end, in both houses, the voting followed party lines. This time the Senate Democrats made sure their votes were on the floor; Sen. Alexander came from her sickbed and others had been called back from vacations to be there for the vote. The bill passed, in its original form, but could not take effect for another year.

While legislators and reformers were drafting the legislation inside, outside demonstrators were holding a mock graduation ceremony for students who had dropped out of Chicago's schools. (Chicago Tribune photo)

Veto and Ultimate Passage

The focus now shifted to the Governor (himself a parent of a Chicago public school student). The Illinois governor has an amendatory veto, allowing him to change portions of legislation he finds unsatisfactory; and Thompson did not hesitate to use it. Calling SB 1839 "but a beginning" for reform, he used the veto to insert nineteen changes into the bill. Many of them were technical improvements; but Thompson also took the opportunity to restructure the oversight authority along Republican lines, add a choice provision, and drop job protection for the supernumeraries. He then signed his revised version of the bill, at Lane Technical High School, on September 27.

Predictably, Thompson's changes re-ignited the partisan political fires that had surrounded the passage of the legislation. CTU President Vaughn accused the Governor of making teachers "a political football" when their cooperation was essential to carrying out reform. Mayor Sawyer, in a move that infuriated black legislators, backed off the demand for mayoral control of the oversight authority for which they had fought so hard; in response, Sen. Newhouse, chair of the Senate Black Caucus, vowed "We're not going to give the governor the right to run the Chicago public schools." By making such extensive use of the amendatory veto, Thompson's move was also seen as a challenge to legislative leaders, especially Madigan.

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The standoff between the Republicans and Democrats, the Governor and the Speaker, lasted for most of the fall, with each side trading charges that the other was playing politics with schools and everyone else urging that the politicians resolve their differences. A mid-November summit called to negotiate a compromise version was preceded by bickering over who had invited whom and an attempt by the Black Caucus to exclude Mayor Sawyer from attending. But ultimately, as the Legislature got set for a brief December session, a bipartisan agreement was forged that worked out a compromise on the critical points. Instead of creating a separate oversight authority, the oversight power was vested in the School Finance Authority, which had been created to oversee board finances in the wake of the 1979 bankruptcy; and the supernumeraries were guaranteed non-teaching jobs—a compromise that satisfied union demands without diluting the principals' appointment power. Other changes gave principals four-year, not three-year contracts; phased in the Title I reallocations; rewrote the administrative "cap"; inserted the provision about studying choice; and revised the language regarding the PPACs. The changes were again reviewed by members of the reform coalition meeting, again, in Speaker Madigan's office. Mayor Sawyer tried to have the bill made effective immediately so that he could appoint the interim board, but was turned down by Senate President Rock; the appointments were delayed until after the spring elections—and thus put in the hands of Sawyer's successor, Richard M. Daley.

The bill still drew some fire: Rev. Jesse Jackson sent last-minute telegrams urging legislators to vote against it "in its past, present and future variations," and Rep. Monique Davis (an employee of the Board of Education) charged that the bill was "designed to create chaos." Bruce Berndt of the Principals Association announced his intention to sue to block the legislation on the grounds that property rights in tenure had been denied without due process. But, with the Governor and the Democratic leaders, as well as most of the Black Caucus, the CTU, and the major reform advocates signed on, the bill (renamed SB 1840) sailed through both houses by wide margins (56-1 in the Senate, 98-8 in the House). In passing the bill, many legislators took the occasion to remind listeners that the bill was only a "first step," and that it was on parents and community members that the real work of reform now rested.

CHAPTER 5: What Happened Next

The purpose of this book, as explained in the introduction, has been to trace the history of the public policy campaign to change the structure and governance of Chicago's public schools. But the legislators who on the day of its passage called SB 1840 a "first step" were right. For the school reform legislation to translate into real school reform—real improvements in the way schools are run and in the learning of children—at least two more steps would be necessary. First, the legislation would have to be implemented: the fine words about powers of local school councils would have to be translated into real power being wrested away from the central bureaucracy and given to the councils. And second, the councils themselves would have to struggle to find strategies and resources and people to actually improve the day-to-day learning experience in schools. If the passage of the legislation itself was a Herculean task, it was trivial in comparison to what those next steps would demand.

If the passage of the legislation itself was a Herculean task, it was trivial in comparison to what those next steps would demand.

It is beyond the scope of this book to describe in detail those steps. But on the other hand, it is impossible to leave this account without at least sketching in the broad outlines of "what happened next." For school reform has continued as a front-burner issue in Chicago. In an era when issues come and go (homelessness, crime, drugs, the environment, war), the attempt to reform Chicago's schools has continued during the intervening two years to draw newspaper headlines, political rhetoric, and public energy on an unprecedented scale. That in itself, for a Chicagoan and a parent, has been heartening: the old attitudes of hopelessness that for years surrounded school problems have given way to creative turmoil that seems to offer real possibilities for improvement.

This chapter presents in outline the highlights of the first two years of implementation of Chicago school reform, and then describes a few indications of the beginnings of classroom-level change.

Organizing for Implementation

Many of the reform advocates were, as we have seen, veterans who had watched the Board of Education stonewall previous reform efforts; they were determined not to let that happen again. The weekend after the reform legislation passed in its final form, 56 representatives of community, parent, business and civic organizations got together at a retreat (the first of several) to prepare for implementation. They laid plans to begin organizing parents and communities to run for the school councils, which were to be elected the following fall, and to monitor implementation of SB 1840. Two months later, a new consortium, Leadership for Quality Education, was formed to put business muscle, and money, behind the implementation effort. LQE, under the leadership of former AT&T executive Joe Reed, announced that it would make $1.2 million in grants to community groups for the organizing effort—surely one of the rare times that corporate dollars have directly funded community organizing. (The group actually only raised about two-thirds of the $1.2 million commitment.)

Meanwhile, school reform had become a rallying cry in the mayoral elections, and the winner, Richard M. Daley, promised to make education a top priority. He appointed a Deputy Mayor for Education, Lourdes Monteagudo, principal of Sabin School, who was affiliated with UNO and had been one of the most outspoken advocates of reform—a rarity among school principals.

Interim Board Starts the Ball Rolling

But Daley's most important contribution was in naming an interim school board that was energetically committed to reform. At the head was James Compton, of the Urban League, the one mainline black group that had given at least lukewarm support to the legislation. Members included Joan Slay, of Designs for Change; Adela Greeley, one of the founders of PURE; and Joe Reed, of Leadership for Quality Education. Diana Lauber, of the Chicago Panel, was named to head the board's transition budget team.

The new board, which took over in May, faced a series of monumental tasks over its one-year-plus of existence. It had to negotiate a new contract with school unions to make sure the schools opened on time; revise the budget, which had been prepared on a business-as-usual basis by the central bureaucracy, to reflect reform mandates and the new union contract (this task had to be accomplished within six weeks after the board took over); restructure Special Education services to prevent loss of federal funds; decide whether to retain Supt. Manford Byrd or hire a new superintendent; organize the school elections; and, once the councils were in place, make sure the power and the resources were turned over to them to run the schools.

The board's first action was to throw out the staff-prepared

Chicago Teachers Union president Jacqueline Vaughn makes a point to Superintendent Ted Kimbrough, hired by the interim board after a nationwide search.

budget and start over. The result was a series of cuts totalling $40 million from the central and district offices, reduction in class size, restructuring of Special Education, and restoration of music and art classes, which had been cut at the time of the 1979 fiscal crisis. The union contract was signed in July, avoiding the usual late-summer countdown over whether schools would open on time. Next, the board decided not to renew Byrd's contract, despite vocal complaints by Jesse Jackson and other Byrd supporters. (At one point, the struggle over Byrd's job threatened to explode in a racial conflict when board vice-chairman William Singer was accused of describing TWO's Leon Finney as "pimping for Byrd.") After a national search, the board offered the post to Ted Kimbrough, a school superintendent from a mid-sized school district in California.

State funding questions were finally tackled in 1989 when the legislature passed a special state income tax surcharge, with the revenues to be targeted to schools and local government. However, the legislation was only temporary; political struggles continued over reauthorizing it or making it permanent. One permanent budgetary effect of the school reform law was the shifting of almost a quarter-million dollars of state Chapter I funds to follow the intended guidelines.

Probably the biggest challenge was actually getting the local school councils up and running. By mid-September, there were nowhere near enough candidates signed up to run in the October election. But if Chicagoans know how to do one thing, it's turn out people for elections. A mammoth organizing effort, both inside and outside the board, featured a major media push, a board telemarketing campaign, corporate campaigns to encourage employee participation, and door-to-door canvassing organized by the board as well as by UNO and other community organizations. The result was impressive: 17,256 people ran for seats on school councils, which averaged out to three candidates for every parent seat, four candidates for each community seat, and two candidates for each teacher position; analysis by Designs for Change showed that there were enough candidates for contested elections in 98 percent of the schools. The election itself drew more than 312,000 voters, in what Sen. Berman called "the most democratic election in the history of this country."

While the interim board accomplished much of what it set out to do in a very short time, it had its critics. The settlement of the union contracts and the rewriting of the budget were accomplished with little or no opportunity for public input—less, critics charged, than had been possible under the old, pre-reform board. The decision to privatize Head Start programs, taking them out of the schools, drew strong protests. And the performance of Kimbrough, the interim board's choice as superintendent, has drawn mixed reviews, with some critics charging that he is not really committed to empowering local school councils as a true vehicle for reform.

Councils Take Up the Challenge

The early months of the new councils saw a predictable amount of confusion as councils sought to understand their task, set up procedures, deal with conflicting deadlines, find appropriate training, and forge new relationships with the central bureaucracy and the principals.

Among the key issues that surfaced in the first year were principal selection and overcrowding. The legislation had specified that half the school principals' contracts would expire in spring 1990 (with the other half up the next year), so councils had to decide whether to retain principals or hire new ones. Again, racial conflict surfaced when principals at several Hispanic schools (especially those where UNO is a strong presence) charged that they had been removed because they were not Hispanic. In all, councils retained 82 percent of principals in the first year; in addition, many others retired (prompted at least in part by fear of the changes brought about by the reform effort).

Overcrowding, a particular concern at schools in Hispanic neighborhoods and on the city's Far North Side, found schools organizing together to put pressure on the board to fund new school construction; the board responded with a $1.075 billion capital development plan for new and rehabbed schools, to be secured through Public Building Commission bonds. In District 2, on the North Side, the Board of Education left it up to the district council to determine how temporary classrooms should be distributed among the schools. Meanwhile, school councils also sought their own innovative solutions: Gale School, on the Far North Side, decided to open school year-round. Other school councils, discovering severe deterioration of the physical facilities, including delayed asbestos cleanup, leaking roofs, collapsing ceilings, and warped floorboards, began turning to the media to dramatize their case.

Analysis by the Chicago Panel of the first year of school reform found that school councils overall had a high rate of attendance (70 percent). At council meetings the main topics of discussion were school program topics (including curriculum, school im-

provement planning, administration, and overcrowding); LSC organization topics (procedures and training); building safety and security; finance (budgets and fundraising); personnel (principal and teacher contracts); and parent and community involvement. Another first-year report, by LQE, surveyed council members and found that, by and large, they believed their schools were operating better than before, and they were optimistic about future council efforts. Interestingly, teachers on the councils were reported to be increasingly optimistic about reform, and black parents were more positive about reform generally.

Systemwide Controversies

While the councils were coming to grips with their tasks, citywide efforts continued. New groups—including the Citywide Coalition for School Reform and the Lawyers' School Reform Advisory Project came into existence. Community Renewal Society started a new publication, *Catalyst*, to "document, analyze, and support school improvement efforts." The corporate and philanthropic investment expanded; by one estimate, Chicago corporations spent $17 to $19 million for school reform over three years. A new academy, inspired by University of Chicago Nobel Prize winner Leon Lederman, was opened to train public school teachers in the latest developments in math and science. And a new coalition was started to challenge statewide inequities in public school funding.

But major conflicts over school reform continued. The ABCs coalition charged that Board of Education bureaucrats were not cooperating with school councils in any meaningful way, and at one point proposed shutting down the central administration completely to reorganize its resources in support of local councils.

Meanwhile, racial controversy kept clouding reform efforts. A May 1990 article in *Catalyst* reported the frustrations of several black leaders—including James Deanes and Nancy Jefferson, among others—over the direction of school reform. It quoted Deanes as charging that "the white boys [presumably Don Moore of Designs and Fred Hess of the Chicago Panel] are making millions of dollars on the backs of our children," and it concluded that "Some black activists fear that current events in the $2.9 billion Chicago school industry may be part of a larger scenario to rid the city of any vestiges of black political power." A group of African-American organizations began sit-ins at City Hall demanding that Mayor Daley appoint a school board that was majority black—a commitment Daley refused to make. Daley also turned down part of the slate of candidates put before him by the new school board nominating committee, before finally choosing the full board (7 blacks, 3 whites, 3 Hispanics, 1 Asian and 1 Arab).

Another major unresolved issue was the mandate in the legislation that a plan be developed to allow all students some measure of choice among public schools, to be phased in beginning in 1991-92. Choice has both advocates and fierce opponents within the reform coalition, and no compromise on the issue has yet been achieved.

The Constitutional Challenge

The biggest challenge to school reform, however, came in November 1990, when the Illinois Supreme Court threw out the school reform act as unconstitutional. Ruling on the lawsuit brought by the Principals Association *(Fumarolo v. Chicago Board of Education)*, the court found that by allowing parents to vote for six parents while community members could only vote for two community representatives on the school councils, the law violated the constitutional one person, one vote mandate. (The court also, however, threw out the principals' main contention, that abolition of their tenure constituted a breach of contract rights and due process.)

The practical impact [of the court's ruling] was to challenge the legitimacy of everything that had happened since the reform law came into effect, including the actions of all the LSCs, and to force a rewrite of one of the most basic elements of the bill, the election of the councils.

In many ways, the *Fumarolo* decision was an affirmation of the importance of the school reform legislation and in particular of the school councils. The court reasoned that the councils could be exempt from the constitutional requirements if they were purely advisory bodies, or if they dealt with narrow topics outside the general public interest. It concluded that the councils met neither of these tests: that they held real governmental powers in an area long recognized as an important public concern, education, and that for that reason they must meet full constitutional requirements.

But the practical impact was to challenge the legitimacy of everything that had happened since the reform law came into effect, including the actions of all the LSCs, and to force a rewrite of one of the most basic elements of the bill, the election of the councils.

The legislature moved quickly to remedy the first difficulty. After lobbying by hundreds of LSC members, the legislators voted in January 1991 to affirm the past actions of the councils and the board, and authorized the mayor to reappoint all existing councils, which he did. But at this writing the task of amending the legislation to meet constitutional requirements is still to be done. Meanwhile, a number of groups are coming together to propose other amendments to the school reform act, and the long-term future of the bill itself is still uncertain.

Two hopeful signs, however, emerged in the struggle over the constitutional issues: first, among the strongest defenders of the bill were local school council members who, by and large, had not been part of the original reform coalition. Many council members went to Springfield to push for reaffirmation of LSC powers while the voting issue was being settled; and representatives of 46 councils met in February 1991 to plan cooperative efforts to gain more resources and authority for LSCs. Doug Gills, of KOCO, who is an LSC member, commented: "The real question is whether LSCs will be able to coalesce around a bottom-up vision of reform, or whether they will be manipulated by the board or others. Will we continue to be spoken about through filters, or will we have our own direct voice? Whether we can develop the leadership for a new parent-community coalition—that's up to us."

Second, a new group emerged, the African-American Education Reform Institute, including both supporters and opponents of the original legislation. The coalition's first public statement

urged: "Let us first empower the school board and the councils to go forward with school reform, and then undertake the question of what the school reform law will ultimately look like in a contemplative and democratic manner, and with the best interests of the children foremost in our minds."

Educational Change

From the day it was passed critics of SB 1840 charged that the bill offered little or nothing in the way of genuine educational reform—measures that would really change things in the classroom with the children. Today there is evidence that school councils are looking for ways to do that—not on a centrally mandated, systemwide basis, but school by school. The Chicago Panel report on the first year of council meetings, cited above, found that "school program topics," including curriculum and school improvement plans, were discussed more often than any other issue. But the changes are inevitably slow to produce measurable improvement in such things as test scores and graduation rates.

Among the notable efforts to date is the Algebra Project, an approach developed by longtime civil rights leader Robert Moses to make mathematical concepts understandable to inner-city children. Arguing that mastery of algebra is a key requirement to further educational advancement, Moses sought to overcome student resistance and fear by creative approaches such as taking children on subway rides to introduce them to the concept of a number line. Sixth graders in six elementary schools are currently trying out a program based on his work and following his principles of inclusion (all students participate), community support (local community groups must be involved at each school), and followup in future grades.

Other programs grow out of the determination to make school curricula better reflect the culture of the students; Sokoni Karanja, a leading reform advocate, argues that children will learn to value school only when they see something that connects with their own lives and culture. Melville Fuller and Alexander Hamilton schools were both working to incorporate the students' cultural backgrounds into the curriculum, while other schools were reportedly working to develop an "Afrocentric" curriculum.

Still other schools are working on plans to reduce truancy and gang activity, and struggling with the thorny question of promotion policy for underachieving students. And many schools are taking seriously the mandate to create a School Improvement Plan as a vehicle for change.

One potential vehicle for classroom change is the Professional Personnel Advisory Committee (PPAC) representing teachers at each school and charged with "advising the principal and the local school council on matters of educational program." Despite some signs of activity, most observers agree that the PPACs have yet to live up to their full potential, according to a recent article in *Catalyst*. The Teachers Task Force of the Citywide Coalition has been energetically working with PPACs, and teachers have turned out to be the most committed (and enthusiastic) council members. But teachers haven't yet become involved in educational change on a scale that would really make a difference. John Kotsakis, of the CTU, charges that reform has "changed the place where decisions are made, but [hasn't] changed the vision of how changes can be made." And Fred Hess, of the Chicago Panel, commented that "Across the system, teachers have not been significantly involved in the reform process."

Questions for the Future

The events of the first two years raise several questions that any future history of the movement will have to examine:

- Can parent and community involvement at the school level be sustained over the long haul, so that competent, dedicated people run for the school elections?
- Can a central staff be reoriented to serve local schools? What resources are really necessary for that work—and how much "fat" can really be eliminated?
- How will the councils effectively balance local school concerns, on the one hand, and (a) systemwide concerns—e.g., union contracts—and (b) the rights of minorities—for example, children with disabilities, or children bused in from outside the neighborhood?
- Will the legislature re-examine the question of how Illinois schools are funded, and be willing to ante up the money for future reforms?
- Can the racial divisions that have threatened school reform in the past be transcended? What will be the long-term effect of school reform on the broader politics of Chicago?
- Most important, how will the school councils actually go about the business of improving teaching and learning in Chicago's schools? Will they be able to achieve genuine change from the grassroots level? How much time, what further changes, what resources, will they need to do that?

Conclusions and Lessons

It is, of course, too early to write the full history of the Chicago school reform movement. Chapter 5 outlines briefly what has happened in the intervening years since the passage of the legislation. But the real changes brought about by this massive effort to improve the education of Chicago's children will be much longer in taking effect, and much more difficult to evaluate.

Whatever the long-term prospects, however, it is possible draw some conclusions about the first phase of Chicago school reform. The school reform movement brought about a major change in public policy. The school reform act succeeded in restructuring one of the biggest, most important public systems in the State of Illinois, the Chicago Public Schools. It was an example of a successful organizing effort that built an effective coalition behind a reform platform, generated enormous popular interest in the issue and much well-targeted popular pressure, and won approval for legislation that went well beyond what even the participants at times themselves expected. How did this happen?

In conducting the interviews with participants, we sought answers to several key questions:

- Why did school reform happen in 1988, rather than any other year?
- Why did school reform take this particular direction, rather than, for example, focusing on curriculum reform, improving teacher performance, or generating more revenue for schools?
- What were the key groups that were responsible for making school reform happen? Why did some groups choose not to join the movement?
- What were the key lessons to be learned that might apply to another campaign to change public policy around a major institution?

We will look at each of these in turn.

1. Why did school reform happen in 1988, rather than any other year?

The answer must point to both background and events. As we traced in Chapter 2, the work in the early and mid-1980s analyzing school problems and organizing around both educational and gang issues had built the background for school reform. By 1987, these groups had put in place a solid critique of school problems and the beginning of a consensus on what to do about them. They had also created enough popular discontent with the schools to prompt Mayor Harold Washington to appoint the Education Summit to tackle the issue; the Summit eventually became the formal vehicle for moving the reform agenda. Finally, previous attempts to improve the schools—whether through community activism, management assistance, or through more modest legislative reform—had left many groups extremely frustrated with the intransigence of the Board of Education.

By summer 1987, then, there were already in place:

- Solid documentation of school problems;
- Plans for school reform that shared major agreement on some important issues, especially bringing more control to the local school level;
- A number of groups frustrated at previous reform attempts and looking for new avenues to tackle school reform;
- A formal vehicle to move the reform effort.

With that background in place, two events became critical in setting school reform in motion. First was the school strike that prevented schools opening in September 1987. The strike, as we saw in Chapter 1, created a wave of parent discontent that was unanticipated by anybody—board, unions, even the most ardent reformers. During the strike a number of parent leaders emerged who not only demanded an end to the stoppage, but put the strike in the context of broader problems in the schools—a connection that school reform groups such as the People's Coalition and Designs for Change were of course eager to establish. The strike thus became the catalyst that enabled the pieces of the reform effort already in place to come together into the school reform movement.

The other key event was the death of Mayor Harold Washington in November 1987. By creating the Summit (and especially the Parent/Community Council), by calling the October 11 public forum and publicly committing to reform the schools, and (in a broader sense) by the model of his own election campaign four years earlier, Washington had given an enormous impetus to the reform effort. His death then effectively removed the dominant figure in city government, creating a power vacuum in City Hall and touching off a new round of city (and state) political maneuvering. Exactly how sympathetic Washington would have been to the reform agenda is open to question; but whatever his views, it is arguable he would have been in a much stronger position to enforce them than any other player. Without him, the reform effort built its own agenda without effective local political control, answerable only to the politics of the legislature. Washington's death also meant, however, that much of the city's black institutional and political leadership became consumed with the question of the mayoralty—and did not therefore concentrate their energies on school reform.

2. Why did school reform take this direction, rather than any other direction (curriculum reform, teacher training, more revenues)?

First, some form of decentralization or school-based management was "in the air," nationally. The Chicago Teachers Union, as we have seen, was investigating a variation of school-based management by spring 1987; Chicago United was interested because it reflected corporate management models.

Second, prior efforts at improving local schools had convinced many people that the schools' central bureaucracy would be a major barrier to any reform effort—and indeed that the bureaucracy itself was the heart of the problem. UNO, for example, had found that efforts to solve problems at local schools were always being stymied by the central system. Chicago United had found the central bureaucracy resistant to its central management improvement recommendations. The Chicago Panel, Designs for Change, and many legislators were frustrated by the bureaucracy's foot-dragging on implementation of reform legislation.

The question of attribution is important in any political effort, but it has become particularly important in the school reform movement. At stake not only are the usual rewards of victory, but something more fundamental: the fate of the reform movement itself.

Third, the people involved in the school reform movement were, by and large, not educators. They were business leaders, parents, community organizers, educational advocates. Relatively few teachers (except in groups such as PURE) were involved, and the Principals Association was actively opposed. All of this meant that the reformers tended to focus less on pure educational strategies, and more on strategies to change the governance of the system to allow more participation from non-educators.

Fourth, the state political situation—and the specific instructions of Speaker Michael Madigan, under whose auspices the bill was written—ruled out more money for the schools because it would have meant a tax increase. That meant that the school bill had to be revenue neutral. It couldn't draw on new resources, only shift around resources that already existed. Hence no new programs (Teacher Centers, for example) could be created; and improvements in things such as teacher-student ratios could only be accomplished by taking resources from somewhere—the central administration being the obvious target. The reformers did not seriously challenge Madigan's dictate on new funding; many of them, notably PURE, had made "no new funding until reform is in place" a key demand. And black groups that had long called for "full and adequate funding for education" did not show up in force to press that demand.

Finally, the school reform bill reflected the views of the coalition that put it in place—particularly the ABCs coalition, but others as well, including the Parent/Community Council. The essential features of the plan were contained in "Needed: A New School System for Chicago," released in spring 1987 at the founding CURE convention. And the Parent/Community Council's plan, presented to the Summit in January 1988, also contained many elements of what finally ended up in the law.

3. What were the key groups that were responsible for making it happen? Why did some groups not join the movement?

The question of attribution is important in any political effort, but it has become particularly important in the school reform movement. At stake not only are the usual rewards of victory—press coverage, the right to claim credit in future organizing efforts or funding proposals, etc.—but something more fundamental: the fate of the reform movement itself. Was school reform created, and won, by a broad coalition that genuinely represented different interests in the city? Or was it, as one participant (Erwin France) called it, "a very successful coalition of white people" dabbling with schools that are overwhelmingly attended by black and Hispanic children? If most people believe the former, then reform has a decent chance to win enough popular support to succeed over the long haul; if the latter perception dominates—especially if enough African-Americans believe that SB 1840 was foisted on them by whites—then the reform effort could fall victim to Chicago's racial politics.

We asked our interviewees (except for legislators) to name three groups they felt most responsible for school reform. It was an open-ended question, and not surprisingly people answered in somewhat different ways (one observer, for example, answered "the board"—because, she said, its intransigence and incompetence convinced everyone else that reform was necessary). Counting all answers (including those who named more or fewer than three), the results were as follows:

Designs for Change (or "Don Moore")	21 votes
Chicago United (or "the business community")	16 votes
UNO	13 votes
Chicago Panel	12 votes
People's Coalition (or "Coretta McFerren & her people")	10 votes
PURE	4 votes
Harold Washington	3 votes
Parent/Community Council	2 votes

Others receiving at least one vote: SON/SOC, the Summit, the board, ABCs coalition, Civic Committee of the Commercial Club, Urban League, Citizens Schools Committee, Haymarket Group.

It should also be noted that some interviewees combined responses. Designs for Change and the Chicago Panel were several times mentioned together under such terms as "the downtown groups." Similarly, the parent and community groups (UNO, PCER, PURE, etc.) were sometimes lumped together as well. Whenever a group was mentioned by name, whether singly or as part of a group, it was accorded one vote.

Designs for Change was by far the most frequently mentioned group, either by itself or in association with the Chicago Panel. Designs gets credit for several contributions: for having documented (along with the Panel) the shortcomings of the schools in the years prior to 1988; for having organized the original CURE coalition; for its expertise in areas such as analyzing proposals, producing position papers, handling media, etc.; for

having hired the services of political professionals Larry Suffredin and the Haymarket Group, who provided invaluable services during both the strategizing and the final legislative push. But most of all, Designs is credited with having "the plan" of school reform that ultimately prevailed.

The business community (as represented by Chicago United) is next in line for credit; again, it shows up on most people's lists. Business leaders contributed three crucial elements, in the eyes

James Deanes, Danny Solis, Lourdes Monteagudo, Coretta McFerren, Bernie Noven (left), Joy Noven and others like them became citywide figures during the reform movement.

of most participants. First, legitimacy: when major Chicago corporations such as Amoco, First National Bank, Helene Curtis, Harris Bank, and Carson Pirie Scott committed themselves to support the reform advocates and the parent/community leaders, their presence changed the nature of the debate. Leaders such as Danny Solis, Coretta McFerren and James Deanes could not be dismissed as wild-eyed radicals when people such as Barry Sullivan, Dick Morrow, Ron Gidwitz, and Ken West were standing by their sides. Moreover, it was Chicago United that, in the waning days of the Summit, called together the "rump Summit" of business, community, and advocacy leaders that became the nucleus of the ABCs coalition.

Second, the business community put significant resources behind the reform effort (see below). This was particularly significant during the final June legislative push: Chicago United, for example, paid for the buses that took people down to Springfield, day after day, to produce the consistent pressure on the legislators that was a notable feature of the successful lobbying effort; it also hired heavyweight lobbyists Jim Fletcher and Chris LaPaille, and the politically connected public relations firm of Jasculca-Terman.

Third, and ultimately less important, the business leaders put their political clout on the line in Springfield. However, since business clout is supposed to translate into Republican votes, and since the June bill was passed without significant Republican support (and with an amendatory veto by the Republican governor), this contribution must be judged as less significant.

Of the remaining groups, four (UNO, PCER, PURE, and the PCC) might together be characterized as "parent/community" groups. (Of course, to lump them together risks obscuring the significant differences between them: UNO is a network of community organizations, while PURE saw itself primarily as a parent group; PCER was a network of community-based agencies, and the PCC, formally established as part of the Mayor's Summit, includes both parent and community groups. The PCC was originally citywide, though ultimately it became a predominantly black organization; UNO is predominantly Hispanic, Southwest and Southeast Sides; PURE is mostly a North Side, white and Hispanic group; and PCER was mostly black and Hispanic.)

These groups supplied the community base—and the bodies—behind school reform. They not only filled the buses and showed up at the rallies (a particular specialty of UNO), but they also provided the most visible figures representing the possibility of new leadership for Chicago's schools. James Deanes, Danny Solis and Lourdes Monteagudo, Coretta McFerren, Bernie and Joy Noven and others like them became citywide figures during the reform movement; the respect they earned from business leaders, legislators, and the media translated into a willingness to trust that Chicago's communities could produce grassroots leaders capable of turning around troubled schools.

Finally, the Chicago Panel was often cited, sometimes (along with Designs) as a reform advocacy group, but often simply for its expertise on specific issues, such as school budgets and the nature of the bureaucracy. Other groups found the Panel's assistance invaluable in fleshing out their own reform ideas; and the Panel's expertise in Springfield in drafting key, complicated sections of the bill has already been mentioned.

Of the groups that received the most votes, all could, in one way or another, lay claim to being multiracial. Designs for Change has a staff of 18, of whom two-thirds are African-American or Hispanic; its Schoolwatch networks are organized in primarily black and Hispanic schools. Chicago United includes white, black, and Hispanic business leaders. The Chicago Panel is structurally a coalition, including groups such as the Junior League, the Urban League, the Latino Institute, and UNO. The racial makeup of UNO, PCER, PURE and the PCC is described above.

If one goes by the most visible leaders, however, four had predominantly white spokespersons: Designs (Don Moore—although Renee Montoya, who is Mexican-American, and Joan Slay, who is African-American, also played visible roles), the Panel (Fred Hess and Diana Lauber), PURE (Bernie Noven), and the business community (most of whose key representatives were white, with the notable exception of Warren Bacon of Chicago United). Of the remaining groups, UNO's representatives were Hispanic (Danny Solis and Lourdes Monteagudo), PCER's black and Hispanic (Coretta McFerren, Sokoni Karanja, Tomas Sanabria), and the PCC's black (James Deanes).

Thus the coalition that pushed through school reform was genuinely multiracial. White parents and business leaders were well represented, as were Hispanics. Black leaders, including Sokoni Karanja, Warren Bacon, James Deanes, and Coretta McFerren served as leaders for some of the major reform groups, and longtime civil rights activist Al Raby, at that time with the Haymarket Group, provided crucial behind-the-scenes support. In addition, the Chicago Teachers Union, led by African-American Jacqueline Vaughn, also played its own role in drafting the final package.

However, by and large absent were the mainline organizations representing the black community: PUSH, the Urban League, the Midwest Community Council, The Woodlawn Organization, Kenwood-Oakland Community Organization. None of these were significant players in the reform movement (though the Urban League and KOCO were somewhat involved), and some (notably PUSH) actively opposed it.

There appear to be several reasons for their absence. One is the standard Chicago explanation: jobs and power. As noted earlier, the schools have provided a hard-won base of employ-

ment over the years for thousands of Chicago middle-class blacks; thus, many of the jobs at stake in the central administration were held by blacks. Beyond jobs was the issue ot power: by 1987, the General Superintendent, the President of the Board of Education, and the head of the teachers union were all African-American. Thus, an attack on the black-led educational establishment—especially one supported by the mostly white business community—could be interpreted as an attack on black leadership. PUSH, in particular, was responsive to this reasoning; PUSH founder Jesse Jackson was a long-time supporter of Manford Byrd; PUSH denounced school reform as "school deform."

But not all of the established black organizations were actively opposed to reform as it developed; many were simply not involved. We asked several African-American leaders why this was so.

Erwin France (political consultant, board member, aide to Mayor Eugene Sawyer): "It was a very successful coalition of white people. There were some blacks there, but they were part of white organizations...window dressing. Black institutional interests were not there. Why? Because blacks decided that the white business community was going to have what it wanted, so they retreated. Effectively there was no black community representation. I don't hold anybody responsible for that except those groups... The black community has got to learn that, when it gets to fundamental issues, you can't retreat, you've got to stay and fight."

Warren Bacon: Reform wasn't black vs. white... most parents in the black and Hispanic communities knew their children were getting a lousy education and something had to change.

Leon Finney (former head of TWO, member of Mayor's Summit): "By spring of 1988 we'd run out of gas. The opposition outlasted us, people who could afford to take off work [to go to Springfield], people funded by foundations, PURE, Designs for Change—we weren't funded by our established organizations to do that. Besides, the institutionalized civil rights groups were tied up with the mayoral election, they were totally distracted. Designs, PURE, CURE—they were not vested in politics, they took over the [school reform] movement while we were away.... Blacks dropped out, between November 1987 and April 1988. I don't blame the whites for moving in. The black community was caught completely off guard.... Education, after all, is a black issue, ever since *Brown v. Board of Education;* but by late 1987 something even dearer to the black community was at stake [in the mayoral election]—and that's where the energy went. It's not that whites threw blacks out; blacks left. It [school reform] was a train anybody could have got on—but that spring, it wasn't *the* train: the train led to the fifth floor of City Hall."

Gwen LaRoche (Urban League): "We felt that it was unrealistic to ask people to lead schools who experience failure every day for years. These are people who are often burdened with the task of finding food, shelter, and who are often desperately lacking the skills or the network to run their own lives—let alone a complex school. We thought that to ask these poor blacks and others to turn their schools around, as you would experienced professionals in Hyde Park—who have conviction and skills—was a bad idea.... But things were so bad. The teachers union and the board—their structure was so embedded and full of rewards for putting in time. The prevalent mentality was to get as far away from the kids and make as much money as possible... Jim Compton [head of the Urban League and later interim president of the "reform" board] caught hell from many of his earlier allies for going with the reform coalition."

Coretta McFerren (PCER): "[Black middle-class leaders] stayed in their ivory towers because they had too many friends who were part of the problem."

Warren Bacon (former head of Chicago United): "The oversight authority proposal teed off a lot of people [who felt that] 'as soon as blacks get in control of a system, here come white folks to take it away. You wouldn't have done this ten years ago.' The strategy was divisive, and it was played up by the opponents [of reform]. But [reform] wasn't black vs. white. There were plenty of minority business leaders who knew the system wasn't working; most parents in the black and Hispanic communities knew their children were getting a lousy education and something had to change. There were minority organizations supporting it; but PUSH is very high profile [and opposed it]."

James Deanes (PCC): "Everybody was supposed to go down [to Springfield]. But everybody didn't go: Nancy [Jefferson] didn't go, Leon [Finney] came too late, George [Riddick, of PUSH] came too late, I was in and out. We begged them to go: I went on black radio and said, you have to come, they're down there writing it [the legislation] right now. One of the most uncomfortable times in my life was when I was summoned, by PUSH, to a meeting and told, you don't have the right to do this without the endorsement of PUSH, the MCC, TWO. And we believed that, up to a point. But I said, we developed this, sent it to you for comment. They should and could have been there, they had the organizations and the salary, but they sat [back], then had the audacity to say what we should have done."

Rep. Anthony Young: "The groups that were down there were financed by somebody; and most African-American groups were not financed. The only groups with a strong African-American presence were the Urban League and the PCC. I've heard those stories about a 'select few' [involved in drafting reform], but anyone who came down would have been allowed to participate; no group that I know of was excluded—I was in the room and I wouldn't have let that happen."

Sokoni Karanja (Centers for New Horizons/PCER): "It's true that the mainline black groups were not there. The Midwest Community Council—I don't know why they weren't there, they should have been there. We tried to pull Nancy Jefferson in, but she did not come out in support of it. There seemed to be a foreboding among established black leadership, and I don't know why. It was clear to me that the educational system was not working for kids in my community, and [reform] offered an opportunity to get at the problems."

4. What were the key lessons to be learned that might apply to another campaign to change public policy around a major institution? Or, to put it another way, what critical factors made the reform effort succeed?

First, a solid, well-researched analysis of the problem and a proposed alternative—what one observer called "a big idea, well-thought-out, at a scale that people think can make a difference."

The work of Designs for Change and the Chicago Panel in the years prior to 1987—documenting problems such as low reading scores, dropouts, the growth of the bureaucracy while school enrollments and achievement were falling—was critical in raising public and media consciousness of the school problem. And the CURE plan, which by spring 1987 existed in some detail, offered an alternative. Thus, when parent groups spontaneously organized during the strike, when community organizations began looking for a way to connect with the education issue, when the business community, disillusioned with the Summit, was looking for some way to focus its efforts, there was a solid, credible alternative in place.

Several participants suggested that a key factor moving reform was the intransigence of the Board of Education in failing to come up with its own proposals for genuine change.

The CURE plan's sponsors made sure it was the first plan presented to legislators, drafted into legislation, and introduced into the Legislature. Similarly, the PCC's plan was the most comprehensive plan submitted to the Summit. When you control the plan you set the terms of the debate, rather than reacting to other ideas—a point acknowledged by both friends and foes of reform. Bruce Berndt, of the Principals Association, commented that if he had it to do over he would have gone to Springfield with his own proposals, rather than just reacting to what others put on the table. And several participants suggested that a key factor moving reform was the intransigence of the Board of Education in failing to come up with its own proposals for genuine change.

Second, a solid organizing base.

Interestingly, this point was put most articulately by an opponent of reform, Bruce Berndt. Asked what he would want to do if he were ever again working on such a critical issue, he replied, "Involve the membership. Make them understand what's at stake"—reflecting the fact that many principals realized too late how much their own jobs and futures had been affected by the legislation that many had simply ignored. Many other participants made the same point in different ways. Bernie Noven, of PURE, spoke of the importance of "organizing people as parents, above all the racial dimensions." Anne Hallett, of the Wieboldt Foundation, spoke of "mobilizing a lot of people around their own self-interest." David Paulus, of First National Bank, commented on the importance of business leaders serving as "informed advocates" for school reform: because CEOs had personally invested hundreds of hours in meetings thrashing out the details face to face with parent and community leaders, they went to Springfield committed, knowledgeable, and articulate about what they were proposing and why. Sokoni Karanja spoke of "the need to have a lot of levels and groups of people involved and active."

Third, building, and maintaining, coalitions among diverse groups of people all of whom perceive that their self-interest is somehow at stake.

This was probably the single most often mentioned "lesson" of the Chicago school reform movement: the importance of building coalitions among different interests, recognizing the diversity of the people involved, but working to build on common self-interest. Fundamentally, Chicago school reform happened because the business community, newly organized parent groups, and long-established community organizations picked up the analysis and the plans put forward by the educational advocacy groups and used them to change public policy. No one single group could have done it alone: the power (both political power and staying power) of the educational establishment, the board and the unions, was too great.

Many of the participants seem, in retrospect, amazed to have found themselves with such unlikely allies. Some attribute it to "magic," and there probably was some of that. But to experienced organizers and political strategists, it's not magic, it's hard work of the kind that pays off in victory. These people particularly stress the importance of "recognizing diversity" in building and keeping a coalition. Coalition politics are tricky: participants may be inclined not to trust each other because of prior history or present stereotypes. They may be uneasy at settling for partial agreement instead of a true "meeting of the minds." They may be suspicious of hidden agendas and last-minute proposals (like, for example, the "oversight authority" proposed by the business community that angered so many black leaders). It takes skill, and willingness to compromise, to keep a coalition together; it also takes a solid understanding of which fundamentals cannot be compromised if real change is to come about. All of these qualities developed, over time, in the Chicago school reform movement.

The same coalition-building skills apply, of course, to building legislative support for a bill. It's important to seek support wherever it can be found—including from people who might not otherwise agree with you on any other issue. Political professionals know this, and the reformers learned it: one, asked what she had learned through the reform effort, said "I learned I could talk to Republicans."

Fourth, resources.

The resources behind the Chicago school reform movement were substantial.

Chicago foundations increased their educational funding from $7.5 million in 1986 to an estimated $12 million by 1989, according to analysis by the Chicago Panel. Moreover, the spending shifted from a concentration on direct services, such as tutoring and extracurricular projects, to support for the major research and advocacy agencies, the organizing effort, and support for systemic institutional change. A conservative analysis shows that, for 1987-88—the two years in which the reform effort was organized and won—major Chicago foundations and corporations spent $1.9 million directly on the reform effort. (This included grants to the major school reform groups such as Designs and the Panel, and grants to multipurpose organizations when the grant was specified as entirely or in part for school reform activities; excluded were general operating support to such groups, and grants in late 1988 that were clearly targeted to the implementation phase.)

Richard Dennis committed "several hundred thousand dol-

lars" (according to Designs for Change) to buy the legal and lobbying services of the Haymarket Group for Designs for Change during 1987-88.

Chicago United spent approximately $350,000 on the reform effort in 1988. Its expenses included a $42,000 grant to the Gamaliel Foundation for grassroots organizing, $30,000 for travel expenses (taking people to and from Springfield), $76,000 for communications, and $145,000 for legal fees.

The importance of the money invested in the reform effort, over time and particularly in 1988, cannot be overemphasized. In particular, nonprofit and community groups that worked on the reform effort were impressed with how much easier their efforts were when backed up by the resources of the business community.

These resources produced several results.

First, the foundation funding enabled the advocacy groups to build the basis for the reform effort that we have described earlier: documenting the problems and developing the alternatives that ultimately became the basis for reform. Foundation funding also made possible organizing and capacity-building of community groups. Foundation funding was also provided at critical points to new groups and coalitions, such as PURE and the People's Coalition. Finally, foundation funds supported both the advocacy and the community groups in their organizing and lobbying efforts. Few private citizens can afford to take off work and spend whole days in Springfield drafting legislation and lobbying legislators; only organizations with the funding to support that staff work can afford to do it.

Second, Richard Dennis' funding of the Haymarket Group provided critical professional services that helped shape the consensus plan, draft it into legislation, build support, and negotiate it through the Legislature. The presence of the Haymarket people in Springfield in June made it possible for the deliberations of the reformers in Madigan's office to be instantaneously processed and translated into legislation, allowing the reformers to keep control of the legislation and keep the process moving.

Third, Chicago United backed up its commitment to school reform with money. They paid for buses throughout June 1988, to take parents and community people to Springfield day after day, to keep up the pressure on the legislators. They also bought legal, lobbying, and public relations services to back up their own lobbying efforts. They provided amenities such as meeting space, document preparation, photocopying and faxing—the kind of information-sharing services that were critical to keeping the coalition together and on track. Finally, of course, they contributed hours and hours of high-priced executive time to the reform effort and the task of lobbying.

The importance of the money invested in the reform effort, over time and particularly in 1988, cannot be overemphasized. In particular, nonprofit and community groups that worked on the reform effort were impressed with how much easier their efforts were when backed up by the resources of the business community. Phil Mullins, of UNO, commented that he learned from the reform effort that, when community groups go up against major corporations, "not only are we David and Goliath, but we haven't even got a slingshot, we're just spitting at them, that's all.... During the Springfield lobbying effort, they [business leaders] could say, we've got a press release up here in Chicago, the latest facts: and they could fax it down to us right away. So now we work to get those resources."

Before leaving the subject of financial support, we should also note that Chicago foundations played an unusually active role in the school reform effort. Members of the Donors Forum Education Group met regularly to share information and ideas. In March 1988 they organized a public forum with representatives from other school districts that had experimented with forms of decentralization. Foundation representatives participated in groups such as the Poverty Task Force/People's Coalition (Anne Hallett of Wieboldt) and the Summit (which John Corbally of MacArthur served as co-chair) and, as we have noted, wrote to legislators in support of the basic reform agenda. They also began planning for implementation even as the final touches were being put on the reform law. Craig Kennedy of the Joyce Foundation noted that the school reform movement saw donors cooperating with each other, and with nonprofit and public organizations, in unprecedented ways; Kennedy commented that in the process many donors came to view themselves "not as dispassionate evaluators of education reform projects, but as active and valued participants in the movement to change the Chicago public school system."

Fifth, staying power.

During June of 1988, legislators complained, one couldn't go anywhere in the State Capitol without running into reform supporters wearing yellow "don't come home without it" buttons. They just wouldn't go away. Unlike other people pushing a cause, they didn't just arrive in the morning, meet with legislators, hold a press conference, and go home leaving the legislators to their own devices. They hung around that night, and the next morning, and the next, until legislators finally got the message that they wouldn't be allowed to go home without it.

That kind of staying power was critical for getting the bill passed. But it didn't just materialize, then vanish, in summer 1988. As we have seen, there was a strong institutional base for educational reform that had been developed, and funded, in Chicago over the years before 1987-88. And, just as important but outlined only briefly here, the reform coalition didn't die after SB 1840 became law. The weekend after the bill finally passed, in December 1988, the coalition met to organize for implementation of the reform; this retreat spawned the Citywide Coalition for School Reform. They understood that legislation is just one step in bringing about change; and that, when important institutional interests and deeply ingrained patterns of behavior are involved, fundamental change requires discipline and commitment over a long period. That history of the Chicago school reform effort is still being written.

Appendix: Summary of Senate Bill 1840

A. Local School Councils—Composition/Selection

• A Local School Council shall be established for each attendance center, which shall consist of: the principal; six parents elected by parents; two community residents elected by community residents; and two teachers elected by the school's staff. Parents and community residents on the Council may not be school district employees. In addition, one student shall be elected at each high school to serve as a non-voting member. Members serve two-year terms.

• On a date in October set by the Central board, elections take place in all-day balloting at each school.

• The Local School Council shall elect one of its parents or community members to serve as the Council's representative on the Subdistrict Council.

B. Local School Council—Powers/Duties

Some of the key powers of the Local School Council:

• To directly appoint, upon seven affirmative votes, a new principal to serve under a four-year performance contract. If the Council fails to directly appoint a principal by casting seven votes for one candidate, the Council shall submit a list of three candidates, listed in order of preference, for the position of principal, one of whom shall be selected by the Subdistrict Superintendent. Individuals selected as principals must only meet state certification requirements for an administrator, and the school district may not impose additional eligibility requirements.

One-half of the Councils shall have the opportunity to select a principal for a contract that begins on July 1, 1990, and one-half on July 1, 1991, with the appointments of current principals terminating on these dates. The year in which a Council makes its initial principal selection will be determined by lot.

• To negotiate and approve a performance contract with the principal. The Council may add to the basic system-wide performance contract, if such additions are not discriminatory and not inconsistent with basic contract provisions developed by the Central Board of Education.

• To evaluate the performance of the principal and determine whether the principal's performance contract shall be renewed at the end of four years.

• To help develop and to approve a school improvement plan, which spells out how the school will boost student achievement, cut truancy and dropout rates, and prepare students for employment and further education (see additional explanation in Section C).

• To help develop and to approve a budget for the attendance center, drawing on a lump sum allocation of money from the Central Board (see additional explanation in Section D).

• To advise the principal concerning attendance and disciplinary policies.

• To evaluate the allocation of teaching resources and other staff to determine whether such allocation is consistent with the school improvement plan.

• To receive training in school budgeting, educational theory, and personnel selection, either from the central administration or from an independent organization of the Local School Council's choosing.

C. School Improvement Plan

• A three-year school improvement plan shall be developed and implemented at each attendance center. With leadership from the principal, the Local School Council shall help develop and shall approve the plan, working also with the Professional Personal Advisory Committee (see additional explanation in Section F).

• The plan shall focus on bringing student achievement, attendance, and graduation rates up to and above national norms and on preparing students for further education and employment.

• The plan shall analyze the school's strengths and weaknesses and spell out major activities that will be carried out to achieve these improvements in student performance.

• The plan shall spell out the major assumptions and directions of the school's curriculum for reaching these objectives.

• The plan shall spell out any staff training needed by teachers for carrying out improvements in the school.

• The plan shall spell out steps that will be taken to involve parents and community and business groups in improving the school and steps that will be taken to educate parents as to how they can assist their children at home in preparing them to learn effectively.

• The principal shall have the primary responsibility for directing implementation of the plan, with the Council monitoring its implementation.

D. School-Based Budgeting

• Beginning in the 1990-91 school year, the Central Board shall appropriate a lump sum allocation for each attendance center, based on the school's enrollment and on the special needs of the student body.

• Within state and federal law and collective bargaining agreements, Local School Councils shall have the flexibility to

allocate available funds to support those activities that they judge most necessary to implement their school improvement plan.

•The Local School Council may request waivers of Central Board policy from the Central Board or waivers of collective bargaining agreements from affected unions to facilitate the implementation of their school improvement plan.

E. Principal's Authority

• After September 1, 1989, if any vacancy occurs in the position of teacher or any educational personnel (including assistant principals, counselors, and teacher aides), or if an additional or new position for a new teacher or any educational personnel is created at an attendance center, that position shall be filled by an appointment made by the principal.

• The filling of new positions or vacancies for teachers and other educational personnel shall be without regard to seniority, but shall be based on merit and ability to perform in that position. Tenured teachers who lose their position in a school because of declining enrollment or curriculum change must be considered for vacant positions in other schools to which they apply, but need not be selected. However, such teachers are guaranteed some form of employment by the school system.

• Teachers rated as unsatisfactory may be dismissed by the principal after a 45-day remediation period in the classroom. However, the principal and the consulting teacher assigned to work with the unsatisfactory teacher may, at their discretion, extend the remediation period for up to a total of one year, although the balance of the remediation may take place outside the classroom. Assistant principals, as well as principals, may carry out the process of teacher rating and remediation.

• The principal shall be responsible for supervising all educational staff.

• The "engineer in charge" of each attendance center shall be accountable to the principal for the safe, economical operation of the plant, and for the performance of all persons employed under the direction of the engineer in charge. The engineer in charge shall carry out the "reasonable orders" of the principal.

• The "food service manager" is under the same obligation to the principal as the engineer in charge.

• The principal shall be responsible for providing leadership in developing a school improvement plan and school budget and shall have the responsibility for carrying out the school improvement plan and administering the budget.

• The principal, with the assistance of the Professional Personnel Advisory Committee, shall develop the specific methods and content of the school's curriculum, within system-wide curriculum objectives and standards and the specifications of the school improvement plan.

F. Teacher Involvement

• A Professional Personnel Advisory Committee shall be elected by teachers and other certified personnel at each school to advise the principal and the Local School Council concerning curriculum, staff development, the contents of the school improvement plan, and the school's budget.

G. Subdistrict Council and Superintendent

• Subdistrict Councils shall be established in each of the 23 existing elementary and high school subdistricts. Subdistrict councils shall be composed of one elected parent or community member from each Local School Council within the Subdistrict.

• All Councils shall have the opportunity to select a Subdistrict Superintendent for a contract that begins on July 1, 1990.

• Subdistrict Councils shall directly select the Subdistrict Superintendent for a four-year performance contract if 60 percent of Council members agree on a candidate. The Subdistrict Council shall submit three nominees for Subdistrict Superintendent listed in order of preference to the General Superintendent if 60 percent of the Council cannot agree on a candidate. The General Superintendent must select one of these nominees. Individuals selected as Subdistrict Superintendent must only meet state certification requirements for an administrator, and the school district may not impose additional eligibility requirements.

• The Subdistrict Council shall negotiate and approve a four-year performance contract for the Subdistrict Superintendent. The Council may add to the basic system-wide contract for Subdistrict Superintendents, if such additions are not discriminatory and not inconsistent with basic contract provisions developed by the Central Board of Education.

• The Council shall evaluate the performance of the Subdistrict Superintendent and determine whether his or her performance contract shall be renewed at the end of four years.

• The Subdistrict Superintendent shall identify schools that are not taking appropriate steps to improve and shall initiate a series of steps to remedy such non-performance, which include the development of a remediation plan and probation. The Subdistrict Council shall approve or disapprove the recommendations of the Subdistrict Superintendent concerning these actions to prove non-performing schools.

As a last resort, the Central Board may remove the Local School Council, the principal, or the school staff at a non-performing school, or close the school.

• The Council and Subdistrict Superintendent shall promote coordination and communication among Local School Councils and schools within the subdistrict on a number of issues, including the development of joint programs among schools.

• The Subdistrict Council shall elect one of its members to serve on the School Board Nominating Commission.

H. Interim Board of Education

• Thirty days after the effective date of this Act, the terms of current Central Board of Education members are terminated, and a seven-member Interim Board is created. This Interim Board shall serve until May 15, 1990, or until a permanent Central Board is nominated and approved (whichever is later).

• All members of the Interim Board shall be appointed by the mayor, with the City Council having power to disapprove nominations within 30 days.

• The Interim Board assumes all powers and duties of the Central Board, but its actions are limited to those that will not impede the Act's reform provisions.

I. School Board Nominating Commission

• A School Board Nominating Commission, composed of one member elected from each Subdistrict Council and five members appointed by the mayor, screens candidates for the permanent Central Board. The Commission shall submit to the mayor a slate of three candidates for each vacant or new position on the Central Board of Education.

• Within 30 days after a slate of candidates is approved by the Commission, the mayor shall select a candidate as board mem-

ber from the slate. If none of the candidates on the slate is selected by the mayor or if the mayor's selection is disapproved by the City Council, the Commission shall conduct further hearings to develop a new slate.

J. Central Board of Education and General Superintendent

• A new Central Board of Education consisting of 15 members, selected by the School Board Nominating Commission and the mayor, shall take office on May 15, 1990, or as soon after that date as its members have been named.

• The Central Board has the powers and duties of a board of education, as prescribed in state law, but these powers and duties are subject to the other provisions of this Act. Among its specific duties are the specification of system-wide curriculum objectives and standards, supervision of special education and bilingual education, provision of transportation and school meals, the development of a system-wide discipline code, and construction, major renovation, and closing of individual attendance centers. Further, the Central Board shall insure that all courses necessary to comply with the Board of Higher Education's increased admission requirements for state universities are available to students in every high school.

• The Central Board shall prepare a "system-wide educational reform goals and objectives plan" which must be approved by the School Finance Authority. The Central Board must then implement this plan to the satisfaction of the Finance Authority (see additional information in Section N).

• The Central Board selects a General Superintendent to implement its responsibilities. After a national search, the General Superintendent is selected for a three-year performance contract.

• The General Superintendent is responsible for negotiating all collective bargaining agreements, which must then be approved by the Central Board.

K. Cutting the Central Administration

• Beginning in the 1989-90 school year and thereafter, the Central Board shall implement a budget for its central administration that does not exceed the average proportion of funds spent on central administration by school districts in the state. This expenditure cap will result in a substantial decrease in central administration expenditures as compared with the present levels of expenditure.

• The Central Board can petition for one-year adjustments of the expenditure cap if it believes that the expenditure cap does not allow sufficient funds to support the minimum administrative structure needed to operate the system appropriately.

L. State Chapter I Funds

• Currently, 60 percent of state funds generated by low-income students under a program called "State Chapter I" are supposed to be distributed to schools in proportion to their enrollment of low-income students, while 40 percent are supposed to be distributed evenly across the school system based on each school's enrollment. A four-year transition shall begin in 1989-90 through which at least 95 percent of State Chapter I funds will ultimately be allocated to schools in proportion to their enrollment of low-income students.

• Currently, some State Chapter I funds are being used to support central administration costs and desegregation busing and other desegregation expenses. Beginning in 1989-90, all State Chapter I funds must be spent in local schools, except for 5 percent that can be set aside for desegregation.

• Currently State Chapter I funds are used as general revenue to support basic school expenses, instead of funding supplementary programs as originally intended. Over a five-year transition beginning in 1989-90, State Chapter I funds will be used for specific supplementary programs, as determined by the Local School Council.

M. School Choice

• By January 1, 1990, the State Board of Education shall complete a study of strategies for increasing family choice of the school that a student attends within the school district.

• Beginning in 1991-92, the school system shall offer a plan for phasing in increased family choice of schools within the school district. However, this plan must allow students to attend the schools involved through a lottery admissions process, provide transportation for low-income students, and be consistent with the Board of Education's desegregation consent decree. Magnet schools with officially-approved selective admissions requirements are not part of this program.

N. School Reform Oversight

The existing School Finance Authority assumes major powers for overseeing reform for a five-year period beginning in July 1989:

• To enforce the limit on central administration expenditures as provided for in the Act.

• To approve and monitor the implementation of the Central Board's system-wide educational reform goals and objectives plan and to oversee the Central Board's implementation of this reform plan. The Authority may prepare its own reform plan if the Central Board fails to develop a satisfactory plan, and the Central Board must then implement this plan.

• To investigate any action or activity that may hinder the progress of any part of an approved system-wide educational reform goals and objectives plan.

• To prohibit the Central Board from entering into any contract, agreement, or other obligation unless it is consistent with the reform plan.

• To issue recommendations and directives to insure the Central Board's compliance with the plan.

• To impose sanctions on any "officer, agent or employee" of the Central Board who fails to comply with valid orders of the Authority. These sanctions may include suspension from duty without pay and removal from office.

O. Effective Date

• This Act is effective on July 1, 1989.

Source: Designs for Change; reprinted by permission.

Members of the Parent/Community Council of the Mayor's Education Summit
Appointed by Mayor Harold Washington (November 1987)

James Deanes (Chairperson)
District 7 Advisory Council

Bobbi Cobb (Co-Chair)
Green PTO

Carlos Heredia (Co-Chair)
Por Un Barrio Mejor

Jan Metzger (Co-Chair)
Pritzker Elementary School

Karen M. Berdowski
Grimes School LSIC

Dr. Mary Hynes-Berry
Kenwood PTSA, president

Ernestine Blackwell
Dumas LSIC

Jill Bradley
Day Care Action Council

Julia Burgess, Executive Director
Demico Youth Services, Inc.

Malcolm Bush
Voices for Illinois Children

Gilberto Colon
31st Ward Fair Share IPO

Norma Colon
Padres Ayunando Padres

Etta Davis
Englewood High LSIC

Lydia Ehrman
Kanoon Magnet LSIC, president

Jim Fields
Chicago Black United Communities

Tee Gallay
Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance

Vernestine Garner
Stateway Gardens LAC

Torris Gatheright
Kohn Elementary PTA, president

Elnora Gilliam
Manley High School

Janet Gonzales
Moos Elementary School

Russell Green
Field School PTA

Marie Griffin
Earle School LSIC

Conzella Hatley
Arai Middle School, president

Claudia Ingram
District 25 Director, PTA

Belinda Johnson
Altgeld-Murray LAC

Ngoan Le
Vietnamese Association

John W. Long
Director, Project Upward Bound

Betty Major
Mothers Against Gangs

Henry Martinez
Mexican Community Committee of South Chicago

Teresa Matos
Kelvyn Park High School LSIC, president

Coretta L. McFerren
People's Coalition for Education Reform

Jesse L. Miller
Lawndale Peoples Planning and Action Conference

Maria Montes
IPO 22nd Ward

Carnell Newbill
Corliss High School

Jean Oden
Chicago Roseland Coalition for Community Control

Paul Oliver
Chicago Alliance of Neighborhood Safety

Matthew Pilcher
American Indian Center

Paulette Rhodes
Cabrini LAC

Rev. Bruce Rickley
President, Hibbard PTA/LSIC

Emma Lozona Rico
Kosciuszko Elementary School

Artie Rivers
Newberry School LSIC

Lidia Romero
Cooper Elementary, President

Jackie Russell
Haines School

Carmen Sanchez
Stowe School

Kompha Seth
Cambodian Association

Ron Sistrunk
ECIA, Follow-Thru, President

Anna Smith
District 17 Education Advisory Council

Camilla Taylor
Coalition to Keep the Schools Open and Reformed

Socorro Vega
Anderson School

Terry Walter
Hubbard High PTA, president

Esther Williams
Byford LSIC

Gerald F. Williamson
District 9 Education Advisory Council

Sharon Yolich
Stockton School LSIC/Uptown Child Safety Network

Members of the ABCs Coalition (June 1988)

The Chicago Partnership
- Chicago Association of Commerce and Industry
- Chicago Association of Neighborhood Development Organizations (CANDO)
- Chicago Central Areas Committee
- Chicago United
- Civic Committee of the Commercial Club
- Civic Federation
- Economic Development Commission
- Metropolitan Planning Council

Chicagoans United to Reform Education (CURE)
- Action Coalition of Englewood
- Centers for New Horizons
- Clarence Darrow Center
- Designs for Change
- Loyola University of Chicago
- Near North Development Corporation
- Network for Youth Services
- Northside Schoolwatch
- People's Coalition for Educational Reform
- Save Our Neighborhoods/ Save Our City Coalition
- Southside Schoolwatch
- Urban Ethnic Neighborhood Council
- WE CAN

Developing Communities Project

G.R.E.A.T. Community Coalition

Illinois Fiesta Educativa

Institute for School Reform

Latino Youth

Near Northwest Neighborhood Network

People's Coalition for Educational Reform
- Centers for New Horizons
- Community Human Services
- Marcy Newberry Center
- Network for Youth Services

Pilsen YMCA

United Neighborhood Organization of
- Back of the Yards
- Bridgeport
- Little Village
- McKinley Park
- Pilsen Neighbors Community Council
- Southeast Chicago

Voices for Illinois Children

For more information...

More information on current activities on Chicago school reform can be obtained from the following groups:

Citywide Coalition on School Reform, 228 S. Wabash, 6th floor, Chicago IL 60604, (312) 663-3603

Catalyst, Community Renewal Society, 332 S. Michigan, #500, Chicago, IL 60604, (312) 427-4830

Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance, 220 S. State, #1212, Chicago, IL 60604, (312) 939-2202

Designs for Change, 220 S. State, #1900, Chicago, IL 60604, (312) 922-0317

African-American Educational Institute, c/o Chicago Urban League, 4510 S. Michigan, Chicago, IL 60653, (312) 285-5800

Lawyers School Reform Advisory Project, 17 E. Monroe, #212, Chicago, IL 60603, (312) 332-2494

Leadership for Quality Education, 1 S. Wacker, 11th floor, Chicago, IL 60606 (312) 592-6532

Parent/Community Council, 1603 S. Michigan, #301, Chicago, IL 60616, (312) 427-8999

Parents United for Responsible Education, 1145 W. Wilson, #2424, Chicago, IL 60640, (312)784-PURE

ABCs Coalition, c/o Prof. William Ayers, University of Illinois at Chicago, Box 4348, Chicago, IL 60680, (312) 996-9689

Voices for Illinois Children, 53 W. Jackson, Chicago, IL 60604, (312) 427-4080

General Superintendent, Chicago Board of Education, 1819 W. Pershing, Chicago, IL 60609, (312) 890-3700.

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